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Television News Coverage of Defence and Disarmament Issues

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Summary.

In recent years defence and disarmament issues became of major political importance in Britain, and occupied the centre stage in the international arena as a whole. This thesis examines how those issues were reported on British television news, against the background of broadcasting journalism's claims of 'impartiality', 'objectivity' and 'neutrality', and in relation to factors involved in the social process of news production: the attitudes and assumptions of journalists; constraints on routine newsgathering; and the news management practices of the participants in the defence and disarmament debate.

The basic methodology employed in the study is that of large-scale content analysis, but data gained by this means is supplemented with the views of journalists gained in interviews conducted by the author.

The first two chapters of the thesis are introductory. Chapter 1 explains the aims and methodology of the work. It sets out the reasons for the choice of 'defence and disarmament' as a case study, and outlines the range of themes and issues contained within this category. Chapter 2 contains a review of the defence and disarmament debate as it was being conducted around the research period. Chapter 3 presents the first in a series of content analytical case studies with an examination of British television news coverage of the Soviet Union. Chapter 4 then looks at the case of the Korean Airline disaster of September 1983, and news coverage of the propaganda war which accompanied it.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine in turn what are identified

as three 'axes' of the defence and disarmament debate: Chapter 5 is concerned with the superpower negotiations on arms control; Chapter 6 with the debate between the British Government (and the NATO defence establishment) and the anti-nuclear protest movement; and Chapter 7 ends the thesis with an examination of television news coverage of the 1983 General Election, in which defence and disarmament issues played a central role in the party political debate.

A brief conclusion brings together the findings and observations of the preceding chapters.

Finally, a note on the presentation of the thesis. References are cited in the body of the text by author's name and date of publication. Footnotes are reserved for explanatory or supplementary points. A full bibliography is given at the end. The thesis includes a number of appendices, containing transcripts of news texts, lists of reported statements and journalistic references in various content categories. All appendices are placed at the end of the chapter to which they refer.

Part I. Introductions

A Vital Engine of this Great Democracy...

If we tell the truth, without fear or favour, the BBC can hold its head high as a vital engine of this great democracy. (George Howard, Chairman of the BBC, May 1982)[1]

ITN's impartiality is a matter of public record. (ITN's director of News and Current Affairs)[2]

The proclaimed 'impartiality', 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' of British television news has been a major focus of interest for several years[3]: the New Right in the Conservative Party has accused the broadcasting institutions, and the BBC in particular, of left-wing bias; the Liberal Social-Democratic Alliance has accused the BBC of bias in favour of the two established parties, while the Labour Party and the trade unions have frequently complained about right-wing bias. Academic studies such as those by the Glasgow University Media Group (1976), and Schlesinger et al (1983), have sought to establish bias by empirical means while others, such as Hetherington (1985), Harrison (1985) and Anderson and Sharrock (1982) have attempted to refute their findings.

This research approaches the problem of news 'bias' by combining, in a limited fashion, two methodologies which have tended hitherto to be applied in isolation: large-scale content analysis, and production studies. These methodologies are applied to a study of television news coverage of the defence and disarmament debate which dominated British political life in the early 1980s.

The content analysis which forms the bulk of the work is

informed by the views of journalists who report defence and disarmament issues, as presented in interviews conducted with correspondents by the author during an extended period of research in Moscow, and also with journalists based in London. By incorporating the views of journalists the research attempts to situate a detailed analysis of the news-text in the context of factors involved in the social process of news production: the attitudes and assumptions of the news producers; the constraints faced by journalists in the newsgathering process, and the effects of news management and news input.

The choice of the defence and disarmament debate as a case study was determined by the fact that when the work began the dominant political issues in Britain were those of defence policy - nuclear weapons, the arms race, and East-West relations. These issues had become the site of intense ideological and political conflict, along three 'axes', and in which several perspectives, or interpretative frameworks competed to define the main issues.

Firstly, a deep crisis developed between the United States/NATO (including Britain) and the USSR/Warsaw Pact leading to the breakdown of detente and the onset of a new cold war. East-West relations were thrust into the forefront of political debate.

Secondly, and partly as a result of the perceived dangers of this conflict amongst the population the British government experienced a major domestic challenge to the

legitimacy of national security policies hitherto regarded as consensual. When the Glasgow Media Group produced its 1976 study political debate in Britain centred on the problems of industry. By the early 1980s it was concentrated much more on issues surrounding defence policy.

Along a third 'axis', the established political parties competed for the right to determine British defence policy. By the 1983 General Election, the subject of Chapter 7 below, only one party supported the replacement of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent with the Trident system. The main opposition party fought that election on a defence platform which included the removal of all US nuclear bases from British territory and the adoption of a non-nuclear defence strategy for Britain. Defence had clearly become a site of challenge to the political 'consensus' in Britain in the early 1980s.

1. The Method.

There are three key areas of study in the sociology of news media, focussing on different moments of the news process. These are production, effects, and content. This section discusses how these approaches and the methodologies they have generated relate to the research presented here.

a. Production Studies.

Production studies, as the term implies, examines the production process of news, and the constraints faced by the news producers participating in that process. These constraints exist at the level of routine practices in the newsroom, such as the restricting influence of strict deadlines on the preparation of stories. In certain news-gathering situations there are wider constraints, such as the military censorship experienced by journalists covering the Falklands War, which have real effects on news output (see Hanrahan and Fox, 1982).

Production studies are also concerned with the input of information into the news process and the techniques of news management employed by various interest groups as they attempt to use news to their own advantage.

Major published examples of production studies are contained in Schlesinger's account of the workings of the BBC newsroom (1978), and in Cockerell et al's examination of news management (1984).

If the importance of production studies is clear, hitherto they have tended to be neglected by content analysts. Apart

from a brief look 'Inside the BBC Newsroom' published in the Glasgow Media Group's Bad News study (1976) there has been very little work combining the methodologies of content analysis and production studies.

Constraints involved in the social process of news production has tended to be neglected, if not wholly ignored in content analytical studies, partly because many journalists are unwilling to cooperate with sociologists whose motives they suspect and whose results they resent, and partly too, because some content analysts have approached news from within an overly conspiratorial and simplistic framework of media 'bias'. This latter tends to militate against the study of news production and the problems faced by journalists, since an account of these factors often produces a more complicated picture than the crude 'bias' framework can accomodate.

The neglect of production studies has led to the criticism that many content analytical findings are unreliable, because they have been reached without consideration of the constraints working on journalists. Findings of 'bias', it is argued, are undervalued if it is not known how they relate to the constraints built into the 'social process' of news production.

The identification of 'bias' in news content remains a central concern of media research in a society where the impartiality and neutrality of broadcast news plays such a major role in legitimising wider notions of democracy and pluralism. It is also an essential starting point for any

subsequent attempts to account for 'bias' or to assess the effects of news output on the audience.

However, the pursuit of content analysis in isolation from production studies has increasingly exposed the findings of the former to criticism. Consequently, in the present work the analysis of content in defence and disarmament news has been supplemented by a study of the constraints faced by the journalists who produce it. This material is not presented as a major production study (which would easily occupy a thesis by itself), but it does allow the research to take into account the views of a body of journalists who have not been canvassed in this way before.

Images of the Soviet Union on British television are a central concern of this thesis, and it is in this area that constraints on news-gathering and questions of news input are most relevant. Thus, it is in this field that the views of journalists were sought.

To carry out the study the author conducted interviews with television journalists from both BBC and ITN based in London who regularly report on Soviet and East European affairs. In addition, lengthy interviews were conducted in Moscow with the BBC's radio and television correspondents based there (at the time of the visit, ITN had no permanent presence in the Soviet capital).

In Moscow the author also took the opportunity to speak with a number of British press correspondents. While the experiences of broadcasting journalists in Moscow were

different in some ways from those reported by the press correspondents, interviews revealed that they shared many constraints. Press coverage of the USSR is not the object of analysis in this study, but much of what the press correspondents had to say was clearly of relevance.

The purpose of the interviews was to establish the existence of constraints on news coverage of the Soviet Union which could not be ascribed to subjective factors on the part of the journalists themselves, but which might help to account for some of the observed features of coverage.

It was considered important, for example, to know if there were any physical limitations on the work of Moscow correspondents, such as travel restrictions, difficulty in gaining access to Soviet sources, or simply at the level of filming and interviewing Soviet citizens, which could explain the relative absence or presence of certain categories of news story about the USSR.

If what follows is a critique of public service broadcasting's 'impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity' in coverage of East-West issues, by speaking with some of the journalists concerned it was intended to isolate any external constraints on the coverage so that these could be taken into account in the overall analysis.

Another line of questioning in the interviews addressed the issue of news input. It was considered important to know, for example in the analysis of coverage of the Korean Airline disaster presented in Chapter 4 below, to what extent observable features of coverage could be related to Soviet

news management or the lack thereof; and conversely, to the relatively skilled news management practices employed by the Reagan Administration during the period of the study.

Interviews were also conducted in Moscow with a number of Soviet journalists and media specialists. These helped to assess the extent and significance of recent changes in Soviet news management practices.

b. The Question of Effects.

A second research area, effects analysis, focusses on the response of the receiver to the communications process: the moment of decoding. This thesis avoids speculating on the effects of television news coverage of defence and disarmament issues on the audience, but debates within this area of research have relevance for ways of looking at and analysing content.

Originally inspired by the perceived effects of wartime propaganda and commercial advertising early effects analysis was "primarily concerned with studies of the relative power of various kinds of communication to change attitudes, opinions and actions in the very short term" (Dexter and White, 1964, p521). A positivist framework "for the analysis of short term effects" (Curran et al, 1977,p3) dominated early research. This framework was recognised to be inadequate as it became clear that the 'effects' of a media message could not easily be isolated. What Morley describes as the 'normative paradigm' of message-effect-behaviour was recognised to contain a number of unacceptable a priori

assumptions: "implicit here was a 'hypodermic' model of the media, having the power to inject repressive ideology directly into the consciousness of the masses" (1980, p1).

Confronted with this problem, and following a number of unsuccessful attempts to resolve it, Bernard Berelson was prematurely led to announce the 'end' of communications research as a fruitful area for sociological analysis (1948, p172). Others, however, attempted to develop the model of a media-effect. Dexter and White suggested that "in general sociologists have thought of the media as having a direct impact upon the hearer or listener, much as a baseball bat or billiard ball have when they hit something. Accordingly, most sociological interpretations and reports about the mass media have been unduly simple" (1964, p29).

The 'billiard-ball' effects model was replaced with the notion of the mediated-limited effect, in which the researcher viewed the media message as only one input into the general ideological milieu of the individual receiver. Klapper describes this development as

in essence a shift away from the tendency to regard mass communication as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, towards a view of the media as influences working amid other influences, in a total situation. The old quest of specific effects stemming from the communication has given way to the observation of existing conditions and changes, followed by an inquiry into the factors, including mass communication, which produced those conditions and changes, and the roles which these factors played relative to each other (1966, p476).

Adopting this perspective complicated attempts to measure effects, as did theoretical developments in the concept of language pioneered by De Saussure (1974). With semiology came

the concepts of variable or differential encoding and decoding.

De Saussure's discovery stated that language was a system of arbitrary conventions - signs with no necessary relationship to the objects they signified. From this perspective the media message took on the characteristics of a complex linguistic sign, the meaning of which was related to the particular social and ideological framework within which it was decoded. Linguistic signifiers (such as the word 'freedom' or the phrase 'human rights') could mean different things according to the cultural context in which they were received. As the social context of communication varied, so too did the meaning of the message, and therefore the effect it might be hypothesised to have. An early exponent of this model of language, Charles E. Osgood, argued that

in human communication, be it via linguistic, aesthetic or other channels, meaning is critically involved at both the initiation (the intentions being encoded by the source) and the termination (the significance decoded by the receiver) of any communicative act (1966, p476).

Eco summarised the semiological conception of language thus:

The existence of various codes and subcodes, the variety of sociocultural circumstances in which a message is emitted (where the codes of the addressee can be different from those of the sender) and the rate of initiative displayed by the addressee in making presuppositions and abductions - all result in making a message an empty form to which various possible senses can be attributed (1981, p5).

Effects analysis now had to accomodate the concept of

Experimental decoding, in addition to the problem of how to quantify the specific effect of a given message in relation to other influences upon the individual. Attempts have been made, notably in the work of Morley (1980) to develop research in the area of effects, but empirical work has been able to add little to Berelson's wry observation that "some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects" (1948).

c. Content analysis.

However, the theoretical developments in models of effect and language clearly had important implications for content analysis, which in its early variants had been over-reliant on positivist methodologies for the quantitative assessment of media output. The basic assumption of early content analytical approaches had been that "inferences from content data [could] be inferred from the frequency with which symbols or themes appeared in the text" (Holsti, 1981, p222). Berelson insisted that "content analysis must deal with relatively denotative materials and not with relatively connotative materials" (1966, p265).

The contribution of semiology in content analysis was to introduce the notion that meaning - the meaning of words, pictures, and signs of all kinds - was variable rather than constant, related to their context and structuring. Semiology implied that statements about meaning could not be made simply on the basis of positivist counting methods.

In the area of news coverage, by way of illustration, this

development implied that partiality or impartiality could not be established by purely statistical means. In a recent content analytical study, Cumberbatch (1986) notes that although Arthur Scargill appeared on news coverage of the 1984 miners' strike more frequently than Ian McGregor this did not mean that TV news was partial in favour of his views. Mr Scargill tended to experience more aggressive interviewing techniques, permitting the conclusion that his views were granted less legitimacy than those of his opponent in the debate . An exclusively positivist analysis of content based on counting the number of appearances on the news by both actors would not reveal this.

The break with a 'pre-structuralist' view of language thus implied a shift from quantitative to qualitative content analysis, as Becker puts it, looking for "the contextual significance of the notions, symbols and arguments used in the text" (1983, p44). The content analyst was now concerned with meaning at the manifest/denotative and the latent/connotative content levels.

Quantitative measures retained the important role of supporting qualitative analyses but were not in themselves sufficient bases for inference: "the reduction of text reality to mathematical connections of numbers is suitable [only] as a structuring aid for a qualitative and ideology critical analysis", partly because "any text explicitly contains only a part of what it wants to express. What the author regards as ideologically self-evident is left out" (Ibid., p47).

Morley describes this development in research as a shift from the normative paradigm, with its emphasis on quantitative/positivist methodology, to an interpretative paradigm, the focus on content at the level of "definitions and agendas of issues". In this framework the television news message takes on the characteristics of a complex sign, in which "a preferred reading has been inscribed, but which retains the potential, if decoded in a manner different from the way in which it has been encoded, of communicating a different meaning" (1980, p10).

Thus, no claims are made here about how news coverage of the defence debate has been perceived by the television audience. The possibility of differential decoding is clearly recognised, since the complexity of language ensures a variety of possible interpretations of a given text. The extent to which these exist depend on the individual's access to alternative sources of knowledge, and other factors over which the news producers have no control.

However, the semiotic conception of language implies that work is done by the encoder in order to communicate the desired meaning to the audience, to construct a 'dominant' or 'preferred' meaning in the text. As Hall puts it in his seminal 'Encoding/Decoding' article:

in speaking of dominant meanings, we are not talking about a one-sided process which governs how all events will be signified. It consists of the 'work' required to enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of dominant definitions in which it has been consistently signified (1981, p.135).

by encircling the plurality of meanings which might be drawn from a single text, semiotics necessarily raises the question of how meaning is constructed by those who produce the message: of how 'empty form' becomes 'preferred reading'; of how, while always noting the possibility of differential decoding, the inherent plurality of the media message is reduced to what Davis and Walton call "a set of simple formulations or frames of reference" (1983,p47). This research attempts to reconstruct the 'preferred readings' of defence and disarmament news.

Graham Murdock, among others, has criticised that "highly asymmetric analysis in which an elaborate anatomy of symbolic forms sits alongside a schematic and incomplete account of social process" (1982, p690). Paul Hirsch has argued that "semiotic efforts towards analysing television content often make heroic assumptions about how cultural themes are perceived by a mass audience" (1981, p196). This content analysis does not make 'heroic assumptions' about effects, and it tries to avoid the 'assymetry' of some content analyses. Its aim, simply put, is to show what versions of events, if any, come to dominate in news, and the means by which that dominance is achieved: to show how the complex sign of the news text and its various levels of meaning are "structured in dominance".

To do this, quantitative methods of organising and making sense of data have been combined with an interpretative analysis of the news text. Content categories and sub-categories have been developed to facilitate the analysis of large quantities of news text on a wide-ranging and complex

set of issues. In some of these categories, "the counting of symbols and themes" was considered relevant. For example, in news about the Soviet Union, the analysis includes counts of how many items in the sample related to Soviet internal affairs, and how many to foreign. With news about Soviet internal affairs, items are again broken down into themes, such as coverage of dissidence.

In relation to the British peace movement, there are accounts of 'who got on' the news at crucial moments in coverage of major peace movement events, such as the Easter demonstrations of 1983. Likewise, the study of news coverage of the deaths of Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko includes a count of those 'primary definers', East and West, given access to TV news at these times.

In these and other cases, it is clear that quantitative assessments give some indication, important in the overall analysis, of news-values and the unstated assumptions of the news-producers, although they are not adequate for an understanding of the construction of meaning in the news text as a whole. This latter requires an account of the context in which appearances and statements are made.

Thus, quantitative approaches are combined with qualitative analyses of the news-texts and the ways in which specific themes and issues are presented. A descriptive account of how the debate was reflected on the news is combined with an interpretative analysis of the various themes that arose in the coverage. It is one thing to note, for example, that the CND Chairperson received X amount of

coverage and the British Defence Secretary Y, but quite another to assess the manner in which their respective viewpoints were presented.

The study of peace movement news does not merely count the number of appearances made by actors in the debate, but looks at the varying interview techniques applied to them, the structuring of items in relation to bulletins as a whole, and other features of coverage not amenable to quantification but which contribute to the construction of meaning.

Likewise, the comparative study of coverage of US and Soviet arms proposals was concerned not merely with the numbers of items devoted to each, as if this could give an assessment of the impartiality of news coverage, but with the manner in which items were structured to favour particular readings of the positions of the two sides.

The analysis is mainly concerned with the verbal component of news language. However, visual signs are also carriers of meaning and throughout the text reference is made to visual aspects of coverage. Where these are considered to be particularly effective in the construction of meaning in the text as a whole, still photographs are reproduced.

d. Content analysis: criticisms and responses.

A number of criticisms of content analytical methodology have been made. Some have argued that the content analysis of British television news frequently overestimates the significance of the strictures of 'neutrality' adhered to by the news producers. Anderson and Sharrock argue: "the claim

that the media are biased is one which it seems to us can only be assessed relative to the claims which the media themselves actually make concerning impartiality" (1980, p368).

We would agree with this assertion: the analysis of news content should take account of the claims made for output by the news producers. As already pointed out, however, these claims emphasise not only the neutrality and objectivity of broadcast news but the fact that these qualities are crucial component parts of the British democratic tradition.

Elsewhere, Anderson and Sharrock modify their position to accomodate what they concede to be 'partiality' in television news, by arguing that partiality should not be equated with 'bias'. Partiality, they suggest, is expected by the audience.

The presumption of neutrality which is assigned to those simple-minded readers and viewers who figure in many media studies should in our view be seen as rather more sophisticated than it is usually allowed to be, a neutrality specified by relevances, not a notional universal impartiality (Ibid., p371).

The audience is not neutral and does not expect broadcasting to be, they imply. How indeed, could one take up a position of neutrality as regards "bombers, scroungers, paedophiles, child pornographers, sociologists, Provos, etc"? According to this analysis, partiality represents the essentially democratic expression of the national consciousness.

The Swedish researcher Rosengren takes a similar position.

The news reporting in a country must be partial in a way reflecting the basic values and actual sympathies of the population. The reason for this is that otherwise the credibility of the media will disappear (1980, p258).

News media, it is suggested here, 'mirror' the values and sympathies of a population.

There are at least two points at which such a view can be challenged. Firstly, it assumes that the media accurately represent 'national consciousness'(given a real set of 'values and sympathies' which could be described as 'national').

Secondly, and more importantly, such a view ignores the existence of competing values and sympathies and the possibility that the media plays an active role in differentially promoting these to the audience. This research asks if the information produced by television news on an issue of major political importance, rather than "allowing the audience to make up their minds for themselves", as the producers claim it does, tends to favour particular readings of that issue in which certain viewpoints are favoured above others.

Anderson and Sharrock make a further criticism of the findings of content analysis, relating to the basic methodology employed. In their view,

the claim that the media are biased usually means that the media men do not support the preferred sociological theories of the media researcher (1980, p361).

'Radical' media sociologists, by their classification, define bias as the absence of their own, ideologically-grounded 'preferred readings'. They are as selective and 'biased' in their criticisms as the media institutions they attack.

Critical media sociologists seem rather more concerned to reveal that the news is biased in regard to the class struggle, against extra-parliamentary left-wingers, trade unionists, and so forth (Ibid., p368).

These authors wish to draw a distinction between insignificant bias which is permitted (against "scroungers, bombers...etc") and significant bias which, they concede, would be undesirable. 'Insignificant' bias, they argue, against left-wingers, trade unionists, etc., can be discounted (Anderson and Sharrock, as members of the academic New Right believe that such views are beyond the pale). Those who claim significant bias are refuted on the following grounds.

Significant bias is not to be found by identifying some under-represented viewpoint. Nor can it be established by reference to the validity and accuracy of what is reported since these are practical matters governed by, and recognised to be governed by, limitations... Whatever they do promise, media men are treated as if they have signed up to be professional sociologists and have fallen down on the job. They are alleged to distort events (if not reality itself) in their reports, where the measure of distortion is precisely the extent of discrepancy between their account and that given by the favoured sociological theories of the media scholars... In effect then, charges of distortion and bias could equally well be reformulated as statements that the media men disagree with their sociologically minded critics (Ibid., p369).

Anderson and Sharrock correctly state that the critique of broadcasting's 'impartiality' should be based on criteria

which are not dependent for their legitimacy on the acceptance of particular ideological frameworks. The grounds for criticism of industrial news coverage should be acceptable beyond the ideological framework of left-wing trade unionism, while the findings of this study of defence and disarmament news should as far as possible be independent from views on the debate itself.

Rosengren attempts to resolve this methodological problem by distinguishing two sets of data in content analysis: intra-media data on the one hand, gathered from analysis of media output, and extra-media data on the other, brought to the research from outside in order to verify the findings: "the study of news reporting... should to advantage be regarded as the study of a relation, the relation between reality (as far as it is known) and the picture of reality offered by the news media" (1980, p250).

For Anderson and Sharrock the 'original sin' of the 'radical' content analysts is their over-emphasis on intra-media data, i.e. the content of the news-text, in isolation from the extra-media reality. The weakness of the methodology lies in its self-enclosed comparison of intra-media data with the researcher's view of what 'reality' should be.

This criticism, where applicable, is justified, but a number of content analytical studies, notably by the Glasgow University Media Group, have attempted to avoid this methodological deficiency and have achieved considerable support for their findings precisely because of their success in doing so. In their study of industrial news the GUMG

tested their findings against "the background of public debate... statistical material emanating from government about industrial conditions as well as whole areas of university research on management, workers and industry" (1976, p40).

Our method was to look at the possible explanations, then to see which of these occurred in news coverage and which were excluded. Secondly, we examined how some explanations were featured prominently and others downgraded (1982, p19).[4]

This methodology does not juxtapose one 'false' account of reality with another 'true' account, but identifies a plurality of competing accounts against which the media's account can be compared. Schlesinger et al apply the method to their content analysis of television images of terrorism (1983), and it is applied in the following research to the range of issues and events encapsulated within 'the defence debate'.

In so doing, this study proceeds from the basic methodological principle that content analysis "presupposes knowledge of the phenomena with which communication deals"(Varis, 1983, p.52).

For this reason, the interview materials and analyses of content are preceded by a brief review of the defence debate, setting out the main lines of contention, based on background material from a wide range of academic, political and military sources.

The availability of these sources reflected the topicality of the defence debate during the research period. They

included the publications of independent research institutes such as the International Institute of Strategic Studies and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, published articles by present and past leaders of the Western politico-military command structure such as those by Robert McFarlane in the US journal Foreign Affairs and by NATO Secretary General Lord Carrington in NATO Review, as well as British, American and Soviet defence documents. In addition, throughout the research period television documentaries and current affairs programmes provided sources of information on the events being reported on the news. Programmes by the Horizon and Panorama documentary teams discussed, at various times, the Soviet defence budget, the strategic significance of the Cruise and Pershing II missile deployments, and the arms control policies of the Reagan Administration. Journalists produced material on such themes as The Cold War Game and The Truth Game.

These diverse sources, culled from all sides of the defence debate, are the starting point for the research which follows. They, and not the favoured sociological theories of the researcher, have determined the various interpretative frameworks available to television news in its coverage of the defence and disarmament debate during the period under discussion.

To sum up, this study draws on three types of data to mount a quantitative and qualitative analysis of television news coverage of the major political issue of recent years.

A large sample of news texts forms the main data base.

This is combined with data drawn from interviews with journalists engaged in the production of those texts. Thirdly, the study makes extensive reference to a range of extra-media sources on the substantive issues of the defence debate.

2. The Categories of coverage.

While the broad theme of this study was decided at the outset it was not possible when the work began in 1982 to anticipate how the defence debate would develop and how it would be reflected, quantitatively and qualitatively, on the news. Thus, an approach to sampling was adopted which would enable the research to incorporate the several 'axes' or levels of the debate, and the differing time frames of the newsworthy events to which it gave rise.

Interest focussed initially on three themes in coverage. It was clear that the defence debate was, first and foremost, a debate about the nature of the USSR. Different approaches to this question seemed to underly all views on policy matters. Thus it was decided to study television news coverage of the USSR - Soviet news.

Soviet news appeared in two forms. In a given sample of television news, coverage of the Soviet Union would occupy a given proportion of news time - X number of items. This was categorised as routine Soviet news. The object of analysis of routine Soviet news was to establish the existence of patterns and tendencies in coverage of the USSR.

But the death of Leonid Brezhnev in November 1982 allowed for an extension to this project. It became possible to generate a category of in-depth Soviet news, by virtue of the large quantities of news devoted to this single event. Routine Soviet news items were generally brief and insubstantial. By contrast coverage of Brezhnev's death was substantial and detailed, amounting to many hours of

newstime. The subsequent deaths of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko were recorded by the author and are discussed in Chapter 3 below.

A second theme of coverage was the peace movement, from which a content category labelled peace movement news was identified. As we noted above, conflict between the anti-nuclear protest movement and NATO was one of the three 'axes' of the nuclear debate. Peace movement news became a significant quantitative category on television. Again, a sub-category of routine peace movement news was identified, from the routine, day to day coverage of the movement's activities, while specific events such as the Easter demonstrations of 1983 produced in-depth coverage of the peace movement.

A third theme of coverage concerned the superpower arms control dialogue - disarmament news. Disarmament news reported major events in the US-Soviet dialogue between 1981 and 1983. By a fortunate coincidence, the news samples from which Soviet and peace movement coverage was extracted also contained some of the most important events in the superpower dialogue, such as the Zero Option and START proposals, and the Soviet freeze and no-first-use proposals.

In September 1983, a 'special case' of superpower dialogue exploded around the Korean airline disaster. This was propaganda warfare at its most bitter, and it was decided on the spot to record television coverage of the event. Two weeks of news coinciding with the incident's peak newsworthiness were recorded.

Finally, as it became clear that the 1983 General Election, announced on May 9th, would be a 'nuclear' election largely fought around the issues of defence and disarmament, it was decided to record as much of its coverage on television as practically possible. This generated a category of election-defence news, which reported on the party political debate, with some limited reference to the peace movement's participation in the campaign.

The need for these content categories, and the variability of the sampling methods needed to generate workable quantities of them, reflects the scope and intensity of a debate which continues to occupy the centre stage of British and world politics.

1. This comment was made during the Falklands conflict when the BBC found itself on the defensive, somewhat unusually, for being excessively impartial. A substantial lobby of opinion was mobilised against the claims of the BBC that it had the right and duty to be objective in reporting the conflict. On May 4th the Daily Mail reported complaints by Tory MPs that BBC news had been "unacceptably evenhanded" in contrast to ITN's "consistently less sceptical and more supportive stance". On May 7th, the national press widely reported Mrs Thatcher remark that "I understand there are times when it seems that we and the Argentinians are almost being treated as equals and almost on a neutral basis". On May 11th, following the controversial Panorama programme in which the Conservatives' Falklands policy was scrutinised, the Prime Minister again addressed the House on the subject of the BBC's excessive impartiality.

I know how strongly many people feel that the case for our boys is not being put with sufficient vigour on certain - I do not say all - BBC programmes. The Chairman of the BBC has assured us, and has said in vigorous terms, that the BBC is not neutral on this point, and I hope that his words will be heeded by the many who have responsibilities for standing up for our task force, our boys, our people and the cause of democracy.(Hansard, no.1234, p.598)

2. A remark made during the 1984 miners' strike in reply to accusations of television news bias.

3. British broadcasting produces a form of news which "presents itself as a merely factual report of events in the world"(Schlesinger et al, 1983, p36). The Broadcasting Act, 1981 legally obliges the IBA companies to ensure that "due impartiality is preserved as respects matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy". The British Broadcasting Corporation is regulated by the provisions of the Royal Charter under which it was established. This means in practice, as former Director-General Howard Newby put it for the BBC, that

news and current affairs are broadcast in a way designed not to impose any view or foster any kind of attitude, but to put everyone in possession of the information that allows them to make up their minds for themselves (1977, p11).

Hugh Carleton-Greene, when DirectorGeneral, identified one of the BBC's main characteristics to be its "impartial reflection of all kinds of controversies" (1970, p4) and the Corporation advertises its news services with the claim that

the BBC does not campaign. It is in the business of reporting, not crusading. It has no leader columns for the airing of its editorial views, for it has none to air. And it does not address itself to one

particular class or income group, for the whole nation is its audience and the readers of every kind of newspaper watch or listen to its bulletins (BBC General Advisory Council, 1976).

4. In the article cited above Anderson and Sharrock criticise the GUMG project for attempting to resolve precisely the problems they raise.

The authors of Bad News seek to reveal the bias of TV news by comparing its reports with those which are found in Management Today and the Financial Times. These last are taken as reporting objectively 'what happened' in order that the television report may be shown to have been selective. It appears then that media scholars are in practice apt to adopt the same piecemeal approach to the media as it is likely that most readers and viewers do.

However, the aim of a methodology which compares intra with extra media data on a particular content category is not to contrast 'objectivity' with 'selectivity' but to establish which accounts of reality, out of all those available, are selected and presented on the news.

Chapter Two

The Nuclear Debate and the end of deterrence.

During the 1970s defence policy was not a matter of deep political controversy. This chapter gives a brief account of how it became so in the 80s, who was involved in the debate, and what their basic positions were.

1. The Death of Detente and the Rise of the Nuclear Debate.

Mary Kaldor observes that until 1981 "there was very little coverage of military issues and what coverage there was tended to be along orthodox lines"(1982a). She suggests that "lack of coverage reflected lack of public debate". In a sample of television news recorded by the Glasgow Media Group in 1975 a content profile found that less than 1% of newstime was devoted to defence issues(1976, p.43).

During this period defence debates centred on 'orthodox' intra-service disputes. Major strategic issues were not up for discussion. Indeed, the Labour Government under Jim Callaghan was able to make decisions of great importance - such as the deployment of the Chevaline warhead on Polaris submarines - without informing its own Cabinet, let alone Parliament or the country as a whole.

The low political profile of the defence issue reflected the relative stability and improved international atmosphere of the period we characterise as 'detente'. In the 1970s the conflict-ridden years of the cold war had given way to an era of coexistence between the superpowers. Arms control, economic and cultural links, the acceptance by each superpower of the 'legitimate interests' of the other, were all features of detente. Throughout these years the anti-nuclear protest movement, which had been a significant political force in the 1950s and 60s, remained a fringe group. The breaking down of the 'consensus of silence' and the development of the current nuclear debate were responses to events which undermined and reversed these comforting

trends, in particular the erosion of detente and the onset of a new arms race.

President Carter, as early as 1976, had begun to move United States foreign policy away from the detente of the Nixon-Ford Administrations. It was he who in 1980 made the first large-scale increases in defence spending and initiated what Noam Chomsky calls "one of the most remarkable propaganda campaigns in recent history... the human rights crusade" directed against the USSR(1982, p.32)[1]. It was President Carter who sought permission from Western European governments to deploy neutron weapons on their territories, and on December 12th, 1979 NATO under the leadership of Jimmy Carter took the decision to modernise American long range theatre nuclear weapons with Cruise and Pershing II missiles. These trends away from detente in US foreign policy were evident before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or the Iranian hostage crisis, although these events accelerated the process.

But the onset of what has been called 'the new cold war', and the present nuclear debate began in earnest with the coming to power in Britain and the United States of politicians who themselves broke most decisively with the consensus of the 1970s. Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and the political forces which they represented initiated a qualitative leap in defence thinking.

Subsequently, a fiercely-contested public debate developed in the NATO countries, and particularly in those which, like Britain, were to be recipients of the new Cruise and Pershing

weapons. The debate produced three very broadly-defined groups, whom we shall label the conservatives, the pragmatists, and the disarmers. These groups and the frameworks within which they argued were not new to the period under discussion, but the late 1970s and early 1980s saw a major realignment between them.

The era of detente can be seen as one in which the pragmatists held sway, while the conservatives and the disarmers remained on the political sidelines. The passing of detente saw the pragmatists ejected from office and replaced by radically conservative governments on both sides of the Atlantic: in Britain, decades of 'consensus' gave way to Thatcherism; in the United States Ronald Reagan became President, scornful of both his Democratic and Republican predecessors.

~~By the Conservatives.~~

The conservatives are referred to variously (and refer to themselves) as the 'ideologues', the New Right and the radical right. In Britain the term 'dries' is sometimes used to distinguish a conservative Conservative from the more pragmatic variety. These labels proclaim their bearers to be confident, assertive champions of the capitalist system, as compared with the much-reviled 'liberals' or 'wets'. In the sphere of defence and foreign policy the conservatives have argued that the years of detente and coexistence between NATO and the Warsaw Pact were a disaster for the West, for two reasons.

Firstly, it was argued that while NATO had shown restraint in military spending, the Soviet Union had engaged in a huge military build-up. Arms control agreements such as SALT I and II were castigated for permitting the USSR to catch up with and even overtake the West militarily. It was suggested that as Soviet confidence in its own military superiority grew, so would the risk of confrontation and war.

Secondly, the conservatives argued that while the West had shown restraint in the sphere of foreign intervention, the USSR had continued to intervene in foreign conflicts and had increased its influence in the Third World. The examples of Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia were invoked to illustrate the consequences of a detente which inhibited the US from pursuing its interests in the world while allowing the USSR to do what it liked. The conservatives' attitude to detente was summed up in a speech made by President Reagan on January

So far detente's been a one-way street which the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims. I know of no leader of the Soviet Union, since the Revolution and including the present leadership, that has not more than once repeated their determination that their goal must be the promotion of world revolution and a one-world socialist or communist state. Now as long as they do that and as long as they, at the same time, have openly and publicly declared that they only morality they recognise is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat in order to obtain it, I think that when you do business with them - even in detente - you keep that in mind.

The feeling that America (and by extension the West, freedom, democracy, etc) had been 'taken for a ride' by detente characterised the conservative view and made it deeply suspicious of any form of cooperation or coexistence that resembled it.

Two main lines of policy were derived from this framework. On the one hand, the United States required a vast modernisation and expansion of its military capability. The conservatives did not publicly dispute the theory of nuclear deterrence - although some were openly advocating the adoption of a nuclear war-fighting strategy[2] - but argued that 'effective' deterrence involved 'catching up' with the USSR.

Secondly, because of the perceived global consequences of detente for US and Western interests, the US and its allies had to engage in open military and ideological struggle with the Soviet Union and its 'proxies' in the Third World. "It is a question of whether or not you compete politically with your opponent and do so in a way which deals with morality, with values, with natures of systems, and we are going to

engage in that with a good deal of vigour, and we hope with a certain amount of spirit", as US State Department official Mark Palmer put it on Jonathan Dimbleby's documentary The Eagle and the Bear.

The main objective of these policies was to reverse what was perceived to be a dangerous decline in the strength and prestige of American capitalism. Strong leadership - which Ronald Reagan promised to provide - and increased defence budgets were the means by which the decline could be halted and the damage made good. The experience of Vietnam was positively redefined.

The corollary of these developments was a revived anti-Sovietism. Nixon, Ford, and Carter had always been anti-communist. They tended however, to forego rhetorical denunciations and to engage in 'normal' diplomatic relations. Each met Soviet leaders. Reagan by contrast denounced the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire' and expressed his hope to "leave Marxism-Leninism on the ashheap of history". Unlike all post-war Republican and Democratic Presidents, Reagan refused any contact with his Soviet counterpart during his first term of office. During the research period his only meeting with a Soviet leader took place with Foreign Secretary Gromyko a few days before the Presidential election of November 1984. He met Gorbachev for the first time in November 1985.

In most respects the British conservatives in government followed the Reagan Administration in these policies, although disagreements were in evidence when Britain's own

interests were transparently ignored. During the US invasion of Grenada and the US boycott of the Soviet gas pipeline project, both of which directly infringed British sovereignty, friction was evident between the two powers.

~~THE PRAGMATISTS AND THE DISARMERS.~~

Both the pragmatists and the disarmers opposed the conservatives' approach to defence and foreign policy. Many of their reasons for doing so were similar, while in other respects they differed significantly.

The pragmatists, in power and in opposition to the conservatives, believed in the natural superiority of the capitalist system and tended in general to perceive the Soviet Union as an enemy. But where Reagan, Thatcher, and the conservatives believed that Soviet gains could be reversed by military, political, economic and ideological struggle the pragmatists argued that the new global balance of power - the 'rough equivalence' codified by the SALT agreements - precluded such a strategy. Confrontation and conflict, they argued, could not in the era of nuclear weapons be considered as a practical solution to the historic antagonism between East and West, since it would mean the destruction of both. A leading exponent of pragmatism in this sense was Admiral Noel Gaylor, the former Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Forces. On October 4th 1982 he appeared on Channel 4's 'access' programme Comment. Taking the nuclear issue as his theme, he appealed for a "pragmatic" approach to the East-West debate.

The Soviets and the West have in fact two common overriding objectives: that we not be destroyed in nuclear war, and that we not see nuclear weapons scattered around the world. On these two overriding needs we can build a general nuclear settlement. We can, together with the Soviets, stop the pointless and threatening language we use towards each other. We can develop a realistic and pragmatic respect for the security and vital interests of each country.

In NATO Review the former British Foreign Secretary and now NATO Secretary General Lord Carrington attacked what he called the "megaphone diplomacy" of some Western leaders.

The notion that we should face the Soviets down in a silent war of nerves, broken only by bursts of megaphone diplomacy, is based on a misconception of our own values, of Soviet behaviour, and of the anxious aspirations of our own people. We should talk frankly and insistently to the Russians at every level of the imperative for peace (1983).

The pragmatists criticised several aspects of NATO policy. Although sharing with the conservatives a fundamental belief in the value of and need for NATO, they disagreed on questions of strategy and tactics. Admiral Gaylor on Comment disputed the wisdom of NATO's policy of first-use - the threat to use nuclear weapons first in the event of a Soviet conventional attack.

There is no longer any sensible military use for nuclear weapons, whether we call them tactical weapons, or theatre weapons, or strategic weapons. Both sides are now equally armed. Any threat to use nuclear weapons is an empty bluff, for any attempted use would recoil terribly on the user.

A similar argument was employed by the former US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara in the American journal Foreign Affairs.

Having spent seven years as Secretary of Defence dealing with the problems unleashed by the initial nuclear chain reaction 40 years ago, I do not believe we can avoid serious and unacceptable risk of nuclear war until we recognise that nuclear weapons serve no military purpose whatsoever. They are totally useless. [his emphasis] (Vol 62, no.1)

During the 1983 General Election Enoch Powell formulated a 'pragmatic' critique of the British government's policy of

nuclear deterrence - the threatened use of Britain's independent nuclear weapons against the USSR in the event of a Soviet attack. The speech was published in the Guardian of June 1st, 1983.

Nobody disputes that our nuclear weaponry is negligible in comparison with that of Russia - if we could destroy 16 Russian cities she could destroy practically every vestige of life on these islands several times over. For us to use the weapon would therefore be equivalent to more than suicide - it would be genocide. An officer may in the hour of his country's defeat and disgrace commit suicide honestly and rationally with his service revolver. But in any collective context the choice of non-existence, of the obliteration of all future hope, is insanity. Whatever it is, who can call it defence?

The pragmatists argued that self-preservation be the guiding principle of superpower relations. Peace in their view was a practical necessity based on the realities of nuclear warfare. The disarmers, however, mounted a more fundamental critique of the conservatives' position.

The rise of the disarmament lobby was the most visible indicator of the breakdown of 'consensus' around defence. Its members were both numerous and diverse in their social and political backgrounds. They included groups with names such as Tories Against Cruise and Trident, the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and the Medical Campaign for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

The disarmers consequently had many different reasons for opposing nuclear defence, and differed also in their practical suggestions as to how 'disarmament' should proceed. The Labour Party, for example, opposed Cruise and Trident missiles, was somewhat ambiguous about the future of Polaris,

and supported Britain's membership of NATO. CND opposed nuclear weapons absolutely in the British context. They suggested unilateralism in Britain as the first step in a longer process of multilateral disarmament, and campaigned for Britain's withdrawal from NATO.

Many of the pragmatic arguments were welcomed and used by the disarmers. By the same token, it was partly the campaigning activities of the peace movement which led many who had previously accepted NATO strategies to 'break ranks' and dissent in public. The difference between the disarmers and the pragmatists lay not so much in the content of their positions as in their style. The disarmers campaigned in massive demonstrations throughout the NATO countries, translating pragmatic concerns for the future into a potent social protest movement. The women of Greenham Common exemplified this phenomenon, capturing the imagination of the world with their vigil at the US Cruise missile base.

The range of public debate around defence policy during the period of the study signified that the consensus of the 1970s on defence policy had been shattered. A radical shift in NATO's stance, accompanied by an upsurge in popular demands for arms control made the issue the key one of the decade. The defence establishment was split between those currently in power who advocated the new assertiveness of the West and those - like Denis Healey, Robert McNamara, Admiral Gaylor - who called for an alternative approach. Millions of ordinary people gathered in political demonstrations against NATO policy.

Central to the debate were competing perceptions of the nature of the Soviet Union, and it is to that subject which, briefly, we now turn.

In 1983 the British Government's Central Office of Information produced a video pack for use in British schools. It was called The Peace Game, and dealt with the subject of the Soviet Union and Britain's defence needs. It typifies conservative attitudes on the issue.

As early as 1949 Russia was plainly showing her belief that Soviet ideology must dominate the world, and her readiness to use military force to achieve that. In that year Russia put paid to the last hope of stopping an arms race before it started - she tested her first atomic bomb.

A war-weary West had seen this coming and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was our response: a defensive alliance, today of 16 countries, which would treat an attack on one as an attack on all. And the need for NATO has been increasingly clear. By 1971 Russia was already outstripping America as the world's biggest arms spender, and her arsenal today, nuclear and conventional, is many times greater than anything she could ever need for defence. So NATO too is forced to keep both a nuclear and a conventional deterrent. Firstly to show the Russians that they can gain nothing by attacking us, and secondly to encourage them to keep talking towards world nuclear disarmament, because Russia has shown time and time again that she won't negotiate seriously with military weaklings.

a. Soviet military power.

The conservatives argued that the Soviet Union was approaching or had already attained a position of military superiority vis a vis the NATO alliance. The United States Defence Department expressed the new mood when it stated in 1983 that "the facts leave no doubt as to the USSR's dedication to achieving military superiority in all fields"(1983, p.3). In May 1983 General Bernard Rogers, the Supreme NATO commander in Europe, told a journalist on Channel 4 that,

in every category of force comparison we are surpassed by the Warsaw Pact at a minimum of two to one and usually up to three or four to one. When I talk about the widening gap, in a year we will field 500 modern tanks in NATO. The Warsaw Pact will field 2000. We'll field 400 modern aircraft, they'll field a thousand third generation aircraft.

New developments in weapons technology and strategic doctrine were portrayed to the citizens of the NATO countries as a response to Soviet superiority. The NATO defence ministers who took the decision on December 12th, 1979 to deploy a new generation of American nuclear weapons in Europe explained their action as being a response to "unilateral Soviet theatre nuclear force deployments", namely the SS-20 and Backfire bomber systems. In this case the Soviet threat was described as a build-up in a particular category of weapon which could "directly threaten Western Europe". As the ministers explained in their historic communique:

Soviet superiority in theatre nuclear systems could undermine the stability achieved in intercontinental systems and cast doubt on the credibility of the Alliance's deterrent strategy by highlighting the gap in the spectrum of NATO's available nuclear response to aggression.

The assertion of Soviet military superiority in areas of "strategic significance for the Alliance in Europe" remained the key legitimating argument for these controversial weapons until and after the deployments themselves. The Soviets were also argued to have conventional military superiority in Europe. General Rogers, again on Channel 4:

I say to you that with respect to the size, the magnitude of the material resources that they have available, not only the quantity but the quality of these resources today, which match anything we have here, and use is based upon technology which they've gotten from us anyway, I would prefer to have in many

instances their kind of quality and quantity than not to have it.

The conservatives argued that Soviet military superiority derived from a defence budget which far outstripped that of any NATO country, including the United States. The following presentation by the US Defence Department was typical.

In recent years, the military has absorbed 15 per cent of the Gross National Product as compared to less than seven percent for the United States - and if current trends continue, the Soviet military's share of the GNP will approach 20 per cent by the late 1980s. The cumulative dollar costs of Soviet investment for the decade were 80 per cent higher than US investment outlays. The estimated dollar costs for the Soviets were more than twice the US outlays in the mid 1970s (1983, p.74).

The British Government echoed this figure in its 1983

Defence Estimates.

The Soviet military build-up in recent years is well-illustrated by the steady increase in military expenditure. NATO's current estimate is that since 1970 this has risen by an average of 4 per cent a year in real terms, while NATO expenditure during the 1970s showed an overall slight decline. Soviet defence expenditure now accounts for some 14-16 percent of GNP in current prices, over twice the level of any NATO country (p.1).

Official Soviet statistics claimed that defence spending accounted for a mere 6.2 per cent of budget spending in 1979 - a sum of 17.2 billion dollars (see Hutchings, 1983, p115). So which side was right on this crucial issue? Evidence suggests that the real extent of Soviet defence spending lies somewhere in between these two extremes.

Two methods of assessing Soviet defence spending are commonly used in the West. The first of these is to take the official Soviet figure (as quoted above) and add to it

certain other categories in the Soviet budget which are known but not acknowledged by the Soviets to encompass military production. One such budget category is Machine Building and Metal Working. The difficulty here lies in the uncertainty surrounding the categories, and the fractions within them which should be counted as 'defence spending'.

A more commonly-used method involves the quantification of Soviet military hardware and other items of expenditure, and their subsequent translation into 'dollar costs'. This was the method used by the CIA, whose figures the US Defence Department, the British Government and NATO as a whole subsequently adopted as authoritative. But there were a number of objections to this method.

Firstly, it made no allowance for the unreliability of estimating the extent of Soviet military hardware. US satellites, for example, calculate the number of tanks in the Soviet armoury by photographing the number of Soviet tank sheds. Cockburn points out that these estimates are always exaggerated since planners assume that each tank shed is full of tanks 'ready to go', when in reality many are not in working order(1983, p19)[3].

More importantly, the CIA's rouble-to-dollar ratio, on which estimated dollar costs are based, is not an absolute quantity. It simply measures how much a given item of Soviet military equipment would cost an American military planner at current commercial American prices. As the BBC Horizon documentary Race to Ruin explained:

American analysts ask American companies how much it would cost them to produce a tank to the specifications of the Russian model, and they cost out each Russian serviceman as if he were paid an American salary, that's between 17 and \$20,000 a man. So they end up with a high value for the things that are cheap and plentiful in the Soviet Union: men and tanks. They've concluded that the Soviets have been outspending by 50 per cent all these years, a figure that's grossly inflated.

Thus, if an American GI received a pay rise, the CIA increased its estimate of Soviet defence spending. One American author estimates that compared to the American serviceman's salary of \$700 dollars a month, the Soviet soldier earns only \$6. American government sources nevertheless count the cost of the Soviet soldier as equivalent.

In addition, by estimating the cost of a given quantity of military equipment in American dollars the CIA was making an assumption about the efficiency of Soviet industry and the productivity of Soviet labour-power. Consequently, should it be decided that Soviet industry is less efficient than was previously thought, this appears as a massive increase in Soviet defence spending. This was precisely what happened in 1976 when, under pressure from the Committee on the Present Danger (a powerful conservative alliance whose members included Ronald Reagan), the CIA raised its estimate of Soviet defence spending "from approximately 25 billion roubles to 50-60 billion, and from 6-8 percent of GNP to 11-13 percent"(Holloway, 1983, p.115). Though on paper this suggested a doubling of Soviet defence spending the new figure represented no real increase in Soviet military capability.

the unreliability of these NATO figures was confirmed on February 19th 1984 when The Observer reported a "major downward reassessment of Soviet defence spending by the CIA", and noted that "estimating Soviet defence spending is an imprecise science".

Russia's defence spending has been increasing at less than half the rate previously thought, according to a confidential NATO study. It says that a change took place in 1976 [the very year when the figures were revised upward], since when growth in defence spending has been lower than the current annual increases in defence spending by the United States, Britain and a number of other NATO countries.

A further objection to the CIA figures argued that by expressing defence spending as a proportion of GNP the CIA failed to take into account the relative productive capacities of each country. By NATO's own admission, 12-14 per cent of GNP amounted in 1982 to \$107.3 billion, while the 5 percent of United States' GNP devoted to defence that year represented a sum of \$111.2 billion. The Soviet economy produces only half as much as the American.

In addition, the figures failed to compare Warsaw Pact spending as a whole with that of NATO as a whole. Jacobsen (1983) cites the Western commercial banks mean estimates of Soviet defence spending in 1982 (\$94.6 billion) which combines with spending in the rest of the Warsaw Pact (\$20.66 billion) to give a total of \$115.26 billion. The United States in 1982 spent \$215.9 billion, which combined with the other NATO countries' spending of \$106.144 billion to give a NATO total of \$322.044 billion, approximately \$207 billion dollars in excess of Warsaw Pact spending that year. figures indicate that in 1982 alone NATO's defence spending exceeded

that of the Warsaw Pact by \$202 billion. The US Senate

Committee on Armed Services pointed out that

of the sixteen nations with the largest defence budgets as of 1978, seven are members of NATO, one (Japan) has a bilateral defence treaty with the United States, and three (China, Saudi Arabia and Israel) are strongly anti-Soviet or pro-Western in orientation. Only three of these countries (USSR, East Germany, and Poland) are members of the Warsaw Pact (1981, p.25).

The figures produced by the US and British governments showing NATO behind the Warsaw Pact in defence expenditure were debatable, and indeed, ultimately recognised as such by NATO itself (although not until after the period for which we have analysed media coverage). Independent studies suggest that even at the lowpoint of United States and Western defence expenditure - the mid to late 1970s - NATO military spending exceeded that of the Warsaw Pact. As for the future, according to the SIPRI Yearbook 1983, "the picture [for the Warsaw Pact] is of a steady, not particularly rapid, upward trend". The United States for its part embarked with Ronald Reagan on a defence programme which if followed through would mean that "by 1988 military spending in the United States would have almost doubled in volume within a decade"(1983a, p.135).

b. The Technology Gap.

A common justification for increases in Western military power has been that the Soviet Union has a lead in particular - and crucial - technologies. In the 1940s speculation centred on particle accelerators; in the 1950s ballistic missiles, and most recently President Reagan personally

championed the theory that the Soviet Union had gained a significant lead in laser technology. Historically, such claims have preceded US efforts to 'catch up' with the USSR, although there has been no instance in which they were verified. The Boston Study Group, a US thinktank set up to investigate American defence needs, noted:

Dire warnings about Soviet military advances are not without precedent. In 1955 the American public was warned by defence analysts and government authorities of a 'bomber gap', in which the United States was believed to be falling behind the Soviet Union. Five years later, in 1960, when the United States had produced four times as many long-range bombers and twice as many medium-range ones the same individuals, now accompanied by Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy, warned of a non-existent 'missile gap'. In the late 1960s, there were comparable allegations of a Soviet threat for a first strike capability and for a formidable anti-missile defence. All these past errors, believed at the time by most of the public, were subsequently proved to be false. Moreover, throughout this period the United States maintained a preponderance of military power(1979, p.39).

US military preponderance continues, as the US Defence Department concedes when it states that "the US continues to lead the Soviets in most basic technologies, such as the militarily critical area of electronics"(1983, p.3). SIPRI cites a US study which corroborates this claim.

While the Soviet Union has numerical superiority, it is inferior in advanced military technology. US weapons designers conducted a comparative analysis of US and Soviet design practices over the past 40 years. In electronics - the key component of Western technological superiority in weaponry - the study found that the initial Soviet utilisation of different generations of electronic components lagged behind that of the United states by 10-15 years(1983b, p.150).

As of 1982 it was estimated by Holloway that "as much as 30 per cent of American military technology was beyond the technological capacity of the Soviet Union to

c. Soviet Conventional Forces.

General Rogers, in his interview for Channel 4 defended his call for increased spending on conventional weapons with the argument that if attacked conventionally, "we cannot sustain ourselves for very long with manpower, ammunition, and war reserve stock". NATO's long-term objective in Europe, he continued, should "by the end of this decade to have developed a conventional capability that bolsters our deterrent by providing a reasonable prospect of defeating a conventional attack by the Warsaw Pact".

Claims that the Soviet Union has military superiority are most often directed at the conventional weapons armoury, and in particular to the European 'theatre'. Attention has been drawn, for example, to Warsaw Pact superiority in tanks and manpower, but as more than one author on this subject has noted, such comparisons generally ignore the fact that Warsaw Pact equipment is older than and technologically inferior to that of the USA and NATO.

On the specific issue of tanks the assertion of Soviet superiority is only possible if one downplays NATO's historic and deliberate emphasis for its defence on anti-tank weapons, in which it enjoys a huge superiority over the USSR. In short, it is possible to distort the actual balance of conventional forces by including quantitative measures which point to Soviet superiority, and excluding qualitative measures which tip the balance in favour of NATO.

Another example of this number-juggling concerns the debate about troop numbers in Europe. US Defence Department figures show an impressive Warsaw Pact superiority of 1,400,000 (1983, p.63)[4]. But this number does not show that Warsaw Pact figures for troop deployments include 1,000,000 personell in non-combat roles (construction workers engaged in military projects and members of the internal security services in the Warsaw Pact countries). NATO's estimate of its own troop deployments, on the other hand, excludes French forces, an omission once legitimised on the grounds that French forces would not be available for use by NATO in a conflict. Now however, this rationale is greatly weakened, as The Financial Times noted on May 3rd, 1983.

General Bernard Rogers, NATO's top commander, caused a little embarassment in Paris the other day at a public function when he warmly praised the 'extremely close cooperation and coordination that now exists with the French military forces.

Mary Kaldor concludes that Soviet conventional superiority has been overstated. Even in Europe, she suggests, where Soviet military power is at its strongest, "by no stretch of the imagination could the Soviet Union win a war against NATO forces"(1982b, p.33).

Qualifications of this kind are applicable to conservative assessments in many areas of Soviet conventional weaponry. Numerical considerations alone may indicate Soviet leads but qualitative indicators usually tell a different story. The text of the following advertisement, placed by the Bath Iron Works Corporation in the American journal Foreign Affairs shows how frightening images of Soviet military power can be

constructed with figures.

One look at the statistics tells the story: in 1982, the Soviet fleet numbered 2,249 ships; the American fleet, 514. The Cuban blockade twenty years ago taught the Soviets the value of a strong navy and triggered a programme that continues to this day (Vol61, no5).

Assuming that the numbers are correct they fail to reveal that US tonnage is substantially larger than that of the Soviet Union. Neither do they show the composition of the Soviet navy. In 1983, when the advert appeared the US had 90 nuclear-powered submarines to the USSR's 70; the US had four nuclear and eight conventionally-powered aircraft carriers, while the Soviets had none[5]. 635 of the Soviet ships are small vessels of less than 500 tons, compared to only 92 American ships of the same class. NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns wrote in NATO Review of February 1982 that Soviet naval power was "still limited". According to Kaldor, it should remain so in the future, given that "the Soviet Union has only twelve major ships under construction compared with forty-two for the United States"(1983b, p.33).

There is evidence to support the view that the Soviet conventional capability, though numerically significant, remains qualitatively, and technologically inferior to that of NATO.

d. Soviet Nuclear forces.

For several years the Soviet Union was engaged in what it saw as catching up with the United States in the field of nuclear weapons. By the early 1970s it claimed to have done so. From a position of clear nuclear inferiority the USSR

achieved what it regarded as a suitable 'balance'. This was not taken to mean that the Soviet Union had achieved strict equality with the US, but signified its perceived ability to deter a nuclear strike by the United States. This state of nuclear balance came to be known as 'parity'.

The conservatives, in opposition and in power after 1980, challenged this concept, redefining parity to mean 'Soviet strategic superiority'. Figures were produced to substantiate the claim (such as the predominance of Soviet land-based ICBMs, or the fact that Soviet 'megatonnage' was larger than that of the US nuclear force). President Carter was attacked for 'going soft' on the Soviets by agreeing to the terms of SALT II, and indeed he was eventually compelled, as re-election time drew near, to reject SALT II.

Initially however, Carter defended the basis of SALT II. He argued that parity did not in any way deprive the United States of its historic military superiority. In a speech delivered on February 8th, 1977, and reproduced in The SALT Handbook, President Carter stated:

At the present time, my judgment is that we have superior nuclear capability. The Soviet Union has more throw-weight, larger missiles, larger warheads; we have more missiles, a much higher degree of accuracy, and also, we have three different mechanisms which are each independently adequate to deliver atomic weapons - airplanes, submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles. I think that we are roughly equivalent, even though I think we are superior, in that either the Soviet Union or we could destroy a major part of the other nation if a major strike was made (Labrie, 1979, p.419).

In this speech he pointed to the one-sided nature of Soviet strategic forces, identifying the Soviet superiority

in land-based missiles as a disadvantage. According to this view, talk of superiority at such massive levels of overkill was absurd. 'Parity' was all that each side could hope to achieve, and parity did not deprive the USA of its technological lead (still in the order of five to ten years for the introduction of new strategic systems). Henry Kissinger put it this way to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations when Secretary of State in the Nixon Administration.

It is of course very difficult to assess what superiority is when you are dealing with weapons for which there is no operational experience and which are so difficult to relate to political objectives. I think there is, however, common agreement that at no time in the post-war period has the Soviet Union had any military superiority over the United States in the strategic field of any significant category. This condition obtains today as well.

One of the difficulties in assessing the strategic equation is that the weapons of the two sides are so different that they become extremely hard to compare... This makes the problem of comparing the forces of both sides almost a problem of comparing apples and oranges.

As in conventional armaments the evidence suggests that Soviet strategic forces are still technologically inferior and relatively vulnerable, as a few basic indicators show: Soviet ICBMs still use notoriously unreliable liquid fuels as opposed to the more advanced solid fuel systems of the Americans; on average Soviet missiles have only a tenth of the accuracy of comparable American weapons (see SIPRI 1983a, p56); their submarines are frequently detected by NATO patrols, while no NATO nuclear submarine has ever been 'caught' on patrol.

The nuclear debate in the period of the study was largely

about the need for new nuclear weapons in the European theatre. As noted above, the NATO dual-track decision of December 1979 was based upon the assertion of the 'strategically-significant superiority' of Soviet nuclear forces in Europe - their 'theatre' weapons, the SS-20 and Backfire bomber. NATO argued that it had no match for these weapons, which constituted a qualitatively new threat. The USA, went the argument, would be unlikely to respond to a conventional or nuclear attack on Europe by escalating to all-out strategic nuclear war, 'sacrificing Chicago for Dusseldorf'. The Soviet Union would be able to blackmail the West into submission in this 'strategically significant' area for the Western alliance by exploiting the 'credibility gap' in NATO defences.

The 'Soviet Threat' logic of the dual-track decision was criticised on several grounds.

Some argued that while there were no precise equivalents of the SS-20 in NATO's European forces, there were the British and French nuclear forces targetted on the USSR. In addition several hundred nuclear capable US aircraft and other nuclear weapons capable of striking the USSR were deployed in Europe.

Opinion also varied about the real extent of the threat posed by the SS-20 missile. The North Atlantic Assembly's Report of the Special Committee on Nuclear Weapons (a NATO thinktank) reported that opponents of the dual-track decision

disputed that the SS-20 alters the military balance in any practical way. They point out that because of the

size of the warhead (150 kt), a selective strike against Europe would cause appalling damage, no matter what the accuracy, and inevitably initiate a more general nuclear conflict. Under these conditions, it is difficult to understand how this new capability would give the Soviet Union a useable weapon, either in a military or political sense (Cartwright and Critchley, 1982, p.15).

Following transmission on December 10th, 1983 of the feature film The Day After, ITV broadcast a debate which included Robert McNamara, the former US Defence Secretary. He argued that:

There was no military requirement for the Soviets to introduce the SS-20s. After they did so it did not change the nuclear balance between the powers. It changed the numbers in Europe, but it did not change the balance in any way. There was no military requirement for NATO to introduce Pershing IIs and Cruise missiles into Europe.

Ex-Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany, the individual leader most closely associated with the invitation to the Americans to deploy their new weapons in Europe, eventually conceded that they were introduced for political, rather than military reasons. The North Atlantic Assembly agreed that the dual-track decision was "influenced heavily by political considerations, notably that deployments should be land-based and visible to ensure coupling between the United States and Europe" (Ibid.).

On October 16th 1983, on the very eve of the Cruise and Pershing II deployments, the Observer reported a story which suggested a different reason for the employment of the Soviet Threat rationale.

The Americans, correctly predicting the rise of the peace movement, hoped to avoid the hostile protest which had greeted the plans for the neutron bomb.

In this same article David Owen, Foreign Secretary at a crucial period leading up to the dual-track decision, was reported as saying that "it was never part of our belief that the new weapons had to match the SS-20s. Later, it began to get political. If you take the view, as I do, that there is such an excess anyhow, you are not worried about the numbers game"[6].

e. Soviet Foreign Policy.

A further bone of contention concerned the nature of the Soviet role in the world. The conservatives' portrayed the Soviet Union as an expansionist, imperialistic power with ambitions of global domination. The International Institute for Strategic Studies reported in its 1983-84 Strategic survey that such opinions were now entrenched in the top echelons of NATO's government.

The most eloquent exponent of Reagan's world view, National Security Council Soviet expert Richard Pipes, believed that the Soviet Union was not only militarily superior to the US, but was also driven by a domestic system that inherently generated aggressive outward drives(p.54).

President Reagan himself, in his speech to the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament on June 17th, 1982, explained why "we are so concerned about Soviet conduct".

Since the Second World War, the record of tyranny has included Soviet violation of the Yalta agreements leading to domination of Eastern Europe, symbolised by the Berlin Wall - a grim, grey monument to repression that I visited just a week ago. It includes the takeovers of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Afghanistan and the ruthless repression of the proud people of Poland. Soviet-sponsored guerrillas are at work in Central and

South America, in Africa, the Middle East, in the Caribbean and in Europe, violating human rights and unnerving the world with violence. Communist atrocities in South East Asia, Afghanistan and elsewhere continue to shock the free world as refugees escape to tell of their horror.

Underpinning the fear of Soviet military strength and Soviet expansionism, was a conservative moral repugnance of socialism as a system, typically expressed in a speech made by Ronald Reagan in March 1983.

Let us pray for the salvation of all those who live in that totalitarian darkness, pray they will discover the joy of knowing God - but until they do let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state... they are the focus of evil in the world.

The Soviet threat, as invoked by the conservative leaders of the NATO alliance, was not only military but moral. NATO was said to be defending not merely a collection of national state boundaries, but civilisation itself, from the "totalitarian darkness" of socialism. These views were however, widely challenged. As reported in the Times of August 12th, 1983, academics at Lancaster University counted the number of foreign interventions made by various countries between 1945 and 1976, and concluded the following.

One study showed that the Western countries intervened in 64 wars, while the Soviet Union and its allies took part in six. A different analysis looked at foreign intervention in 641 post-war conflicts (defined more broadly this time to include coups and large civil disturbances as well as wars). Western nations intervened on 243 occasions and the communist countries, including North Vietnam, Cuba, China and the Warsaw Pact nations, only on 20.

Fred Halliday, of the Institute of Policy Studies, challenged the conservative analysis of specific international problems, for example, that the Soviet role in

the Middle East - one of the main 'hotspots' of recent years
- had been or was now an aggressive, expansionary one.

They [the USSR] were among the first to recognise the state of Israel... they have never denied Israel's right to exist...Soviet arms supplies have never been such as to give the Arab states overall military superiority... they have never acceded to Arab requests for nuclear weapons, despite the fact that Israel is known to have an almost immediate nuclear capacity(1983, p.73).

Jonathan Steele, foreign affairs correspondent for The Guardian, has noted that

contrary to the conventional wisdom in the West, the Kremlin has always tended to act in the Middle East with restraint... The Soviet Union discouraged the three recent Arab-Israeli wars and has imposed limits on its arms deliveries, often at the risk of incurring Arab displeasure. On the central aspect of the Arab-Israeli dispute, the existence of Israel, Moscow has consistently urged the Arabs to recognise the Jewish state (1983, p.180).

The extent to which one could identify a Soviet Threat to Western Europe was also disputed. NATO leaders themselves, while invoking the scale of the Soviet Threat at one moment, would concede that they had no reason to expect an attack. In his Channel 4 interview General Rogers stated that "my concern is not an attack out of the blue, even though the military situation is against us today. The Soviet Union does not want war".

The British Government's 1983 Defence Estimates, the annual assessment of Britain's defence needs, stated that "there is no evidence that the Soviet Union is planning any immediate attack on the West"(p20).

On Channel 4's Comment Admiral Gaylor agreed that "there

is no evidence whatsoever that the Warsaw Pact is contemplating an attack on NATO. There are appalling risks from the standpoint of the USSR and no reasonable gain worth those risks". Jonathan Steele suggested that

as long as peaceful relations between Western Europe and the Soviet Union remain good and detente continues, even in a modified form, it seems inconceivable that Moscow would prefer the unknown consequences of attack and the problems of occupation. It has found it hard to maintain control over Eastern Europe for almost forty years. To add another unwilling region appears to make no sense(1983, p79).

NATO's former Director of Military Operations in Europe, Admiral Eugene Carroll, took a pragmatic view of the Soviet's alleged desire to attack the West on BBC2's Newsnight, and considered how the view might look from the Soviet side.

We sometimes tend to look at this problem only from our own point of view. We know what our intentions are, we know we're good people, we're not going to attack, but that view isn't always accepted on the other side of the fence. They certainly see some potential for a NATO attack and as a result the fear level goes up, the pressure for improved forces goes up on both sides, and we're in this very foolish, destructive and wasteful arms race to confront each other in Europe.

There were thus a considerable range of views on Soviet foreign policy being expressed in the debate. The dominant, conservative view of the Soviet Threat was widely contested, even by politicians of the right such as Enoch Powell MP. In a speech reported in the Guardian of October 10th, 1983, Powell referred to

a quintessentially American misunderstanding of Soviet Russia as an aggressive power, militaristically and ideologically bent on world domination... The notion has no basis in fact; it exists wholly in the realm of the imagination. While the United States, often with some of its allies, has fought two major wars in Asia and intervened with military force in Central America and

the Middle East, no Russian soldier stands today an inch beyond where they stood in 1948, with the one solitary exception that proves the rule - Afghanistan, where a backyard war is being fought with the same motives and prospects of failure as it was twice fought by the British empire in India. If Russia is bent on world domination, she has been remarkably slothful and remarkably unsuccessful.

To conclude, this chapter has tried to demonstrate the range of views on issues which form the background to news coverage analysed in subsequent chapters. Those views tend to the conclusion that the historical Western superiority in weapons of all kinds, if it has been narrowed in recent years by the Soviet Union, has not been eradicated. They indicate also that the dominant view of the Soviet Threat as expressed by the conservatives in power is far from being 'consensual'.

1. Chomsky argues that the objective of the human rights campaign was to regain popular support - seriously depleted by the 'Vietnam syndrome' - for US intervention abroad. "An extraordinary campaign was executed with great skill, selecting targets of opportunity, at a time when everyone knew beyond doubt that the United States had committed major crimes in Cuba, Indochina, Chile and elsewhere".

2. Elements of this strategy ranged from the 'give 'em enough shovels' philosophy of such as T.K. Jones, US Under Secretary of Defence (the view that the United States could survive a nuclear exchange with the Soviets given simple preparation), to the more sophisticated positions of such as Paul Nitze, the Reagan Administration's chief INF negotiator. In 1956 Nitze wrote that "it is quite possible that in a general nuclear war one side or the other could 'win' decisively" (see 'The Holocaust Lobby' by Charles Mann, in Sanity, October 1983).

Mann notes that "after the 1980 election, Reagan installed no fewer than thirty two CPD (Committee on the Present Danger) officials in his administration" (p22), including one Colin Gray, appointed to serve as a consultant in the General Advisory Committee to the US Departments of Defence and State. Gray's view, quoted in the Mann article, is that full-scale nuclear war "is likely to be waged to coerce the Soviet Union to give up some recent gain. Thus, a president must have the ability not merely to end a war but to end it favourably".

3. Cockburn argues that inaccuracies are built into the methods of estimating Soviet military power.

Satellites can watch over enemy territory with an ease that would have been unimaginable before the Space Age, but they still cannot see through clouds. This is why, for example, the output from the tank factory at Kharkov in the Ukraine is regularly listed as 500 tanks a year in unclassified intelligence publications. Through a meteorological quirk, Kharkov is covered by clouds most of the time, rendering the specialists in watching Soviet tank production effectively blind to the scale of the plant's operations. 'That is why they give the figure of 500', one former intelligence officer told me. It's the number they use when they don't know if it's zero or 1000(1983, p19).

4. The 1983 edition of Soviet Military Power claims that, as of 1981, Warsaw Pact ground forces in Europe numbered 173 divisions, or four million personell. NATO, according to this comparison, had only 84 divisions with 2.6 million troops.

5. The Soviet Union had in service at this time three Kiev class conventionally-powered aircraft carriers. These are not comparable to the floating platforms for strategic aircraft which we in the West understand as an 'aircraft carrier'.

6. The question then arose, and was put most forcefully by

the disarmers - if the new American weapons were not a response to the Soviet SS-20, what were they for? In the BBC Panorama documentary Beyond Deterrence journalists spoke to a number of scientists who had been employed by the United States government as consultants in this field. One, John Steinbruner, argued that Pershing II in particular was a qualitatively new weapon, not comparable to the SS-20 or the Pershing I which it replaced. The Pershing II was a strategic weapon, capable of hitting targets inside the Soviet Union from European soil.

It threatens their basic command structure with pre-emptive attack... It does look as if it might enable us to undertake a first strike... from the Soviet point of view it is an extremely provocative weapon that not only deals with a limited capacity for the European theatre but their entire strategic operation.

NATO had argued that Pershing II was not a strategic missile because its range fell 12% short of the 100 or so strategic targets in and around Moscow. Another interviewee, Paul Brackner, replied to this by pointing out that "any competent staff of engineers in three or four months can make changes in that missile to make it increase its range by 12%". SIPRI observed that Pershing II missiles have ten times the accuracy of SS-20s.

The Cruise missile on the other hand, while extremely accurate, was not a first-strike weapon because of its slow flight time. It was, according to the American Brookings Institute, a second-strike weapon, useable only in the context of a protracted nuclear war. A Brookings Institute report titled Cruise Missiles, remarked that the presence of Cruise missiles would create a

psychological climate in which the Russians instinct to retaliate [to a US first strike] is tempered by the knowledge that the damage of the initial strikes, though significant, is limited, and that an excessive response would inevitably be met by escalation.(Betts, 1981, p.184)

Cruise missiles, the report continues, are more suited to "follow on options when raid sizes are more likely to be larger, more targets are likely to be attacked, and the distinction between theatre and strategic use of Cruise missiles becomes blurred". The term 'follow on option' can be considered as a euphemism for the second strike in a protracted nuclear war.

Part II. Images of the Enemy

Reporting the Soviet Union

Arguments about nuclear defence are closely linked with the concept of the Soviet threat. Perceptions of the Soviet Union inform the East-West debate, constituting a part of the cognitive framework within which individuals make sense of the issues. This chapter examines what television news reports about the USSR: television's 'image of the enemy'.

The analysis refers to two separate samples of 'routine' Soviet news. The first sample included all news bulletins broadcast by the three then existing channels between May 1st and June 30th, 1982. The second included the main evening bulletins on four channels between May 10th and June 8th, 1983. 75 items in the category of Soviet news were identified over this period (see table 3.1), excluding references to the Soviet Union in the context of arms control talks which are analysed in a subsequent chapter.

These items were concerned, on the one hand, with coverage of Soviet society (reportage on events going on inside the USSR, or comments on those events from outside the USSR itself), and on the other, coverage of Soviet foreign policy and events in which the USSR is reported as an actor on the world stage, including Soviet-British relations. Table 3.1 lists the items by story. The chapter also looks at coverage recorded on the deaths between November 1982 and March 1985 of Soviet leaders Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko.

These 'special' events saw the Soviet government pass

through a period of rapid change. In a political system renowned and in some quarters reviled for its predictable stability , three state and Party leaders died in quick succession [1]. The deaths of Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko saw the passing of one leadership generation in the USSR and the arrival of another. The leadership changes had an obvious and enormous impact on Soviet and world affairs they were also the occasion of a unique series of media events.

Until the death of Leonid Brezhnev television news had never been present at the state funeral of a Soviet leader. The television era arrived too late to record the death of Stalin in 1953, and nearly 30 years passed before another Soviet leader died in office. But following the death of Brezhnev, and indicative of how top-heavy with old men the Soviet leadership had become, his two successors survived for only 16 and 13 months respectively. Three times in less than three years Western journalists marked the passing of a Soviet leader. So used to it did they become that by the time of Konstantin Chernenko's funeral on March 13th, 1985, they were describing the ceremony as "a well-practised ritual"(3 2200 13/3/85) with well-established traditions.

Then once again, as tradition now dictates, the military parade began.(3 2200 13/3/85)

Had this study been able to include television coverage of one such change in the Soviet leadership it would have been fortuitous. That there were three within the period of the research was a somewhat bizarre coincidence, providing the opportunity to assemble a unique sample of 'in-depth'

coverage of the USSR. This news was more than a simple reporting of the facts about the death of one leader and his succession by another. As background to the basic event journalists constructed long and detailed narratives about the Soviet Union. The discussion examines how these were constructed, and the images of the Soviet Union which they produced.

Table 3.1. Routine Soviet News for the sample periods May and June 1982, and May 10th - June 8th 1983.

Story	Number of items
Moscow Peace Committee	1
Bella Korchnoi	1
Anatoly Scharansky	1
Andrei Sakharov	3
Alexander Solzhenitsyn	2
Moscow newsreader, 1983	3
Soviet space programme	5
1982 May Day Parade	1
Andropov promotion, 1982	1
Volga River disaster, 1983	6
The Russian system	1
Soviet involvement in Middle East, June 1982.	3
Soviet involvement in Middle East, June 1983	5
Soviet involvement in Afghanistan	7
Soviet involvement in the Falklands	13
European gas pipeline	2
US-Soviet grain deal	1
Defence White Paper, 1982	5
Diplock Security Report, 1983	4
Geoffrey Prime Affair, 1983	8
Computer smuggling, 1983	2
Total	75

1. Themes and Issues in Soviet News.

a. Inside the USSR.

The selection of news about the Soviet Union is determined to some extent by a routine structure of newsvalues. This means that, for example, disasters in the USSR when they become known are usually reported on British television: events such as that in June 1983 when a passenger ship at Ulyanov on the Volga River was involved in an accident in which more than one hundred people died. Six items of television news covered the story[2].

Major state occasions such as the May Day and November Red Square parades are regularly covered. Being the nearest the Soviets come to pomp and ceremony, they attract the broadcasters as spectacle. Nowadays, Soviet television supplies live pictures of these events to Western broadcasters through the Eurovision network[3].

Less televisual aspects of Soviet political life are reported. On May 24th, 1982 Yuri Andropov was appointed Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU. There was speculation in the press that Mr Andropov was now the leading contender for the succession to President Brezhnev, then ailing rapidly. Although ITN did not cover the story, BBC reported it on one bulletin, noting (correctly, as it transpired) that "it's one of the most important appointments in the Kremlin for years"(1 2100 24/5/82).

The Soviet space programme is a consistently newsworthy theme. Space travel is still sufficiently rare to qualify as

news - whether it be the fruits of Soviet, American or Western European expertise. And, like Red Square parades, space missions provide good pictures. They are usually covered as straight 'science' stories, although political themes are occasionally introduced. BBC's coverage of a joint Soviet-French spacemission in 1982 reported the French assurance that the venture was "purely scientific without political significance"(1 2100 24/6/82).

A major theme in coverage of the USSR during the sample period was that of dissent - the activities and experiences of groups and individuals opposed to the Soviet system inside the USSR itself (dissidents) and outside (defectors and exiles). This theme occupied the largest proportion of the total news output about Soviet society during the sample (11 items). Table 3.2 shows the Soviet and ex-Soviet citizens who appeared on the news during the sample period. With the exception of political leaders, all the names are those of dissidents, exiles, or emigres.

The following items give a flavour of this coverage during the sample. On June 9th 1982 ITN reported that the family of a Soviet exile, former chess champion Victor Korchnoi, had received exit visas to join him in the West, to where he had defected six years previously.

The wife of Victor Korchnoi, the former Russian chess grand master, says she's been granted an exit visa to join her husband in the West. Mrs Bella Korchnoi said in Moscow that she and her son Igor had been told that they should leave the country in three weeks time. Victor Korchnoi decided to stay in the West six years ago and has been trying to get his family out of Russia ever since. (3 2200 9/6/82)

Table 3.2 Soviets mentioned in the routine news sample.

May-June 1982

President Brezhnev

Yuri Andropov

Ten young people

Victor Korchnoi

Bella Korchnoi

Igor Korchnoi

May 10th - June 8th 1983

Anatoly Scharansky

Scharansky's wife

Scharansky's mother

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Andrei Sakharov

Elena Bonner

Sergei Kodorovich

Vladimir Danchev

Yuri Andropov

Soviet Government
spokesman

Konstantin Chernenko

Another item reported on the formation of an unofficial peace committee in Moscow. "A group of ten young people", it began, "have taken a rather brave step".

They've set up an unofficial peace committee. It's to petition their government and the United States to work harder for nuclear disarmament. They've already appealed to the Soviet President Mr Brezhnev asking that he spend less time criticising American peace proposals and more time looking for practical ways to stop the arms race. And they say the message applies equally well to President Reagan. (2 2245 4/6/82)

Many of these stories concern the dissidents and emigres who have become particularly well-known in the West. In the sample three bulletins carried news about Andrei Sakharov, the dissident Soviet physicist. One reported that he had been refused permission to leave the USSR, "because he knows state secrets", and two were based on press conferences given by Sakharov's wife in Moscow.

The announcement came from the Soviet news agency TASS apparently to coincide with the return to Moscow of Sakharov's wife. There had been reports that Sakharov would be offered a university post in Austria but today his wife Elena Bonner said she doubted whether he would ever be allowed to go free.(1 2100 11/5/83)

On the eve of his 62nd birthday Andrei Sakharov is ill and alone in Gorky, his wife said today. She'd come to Moscow to try to get both of them admitted to the Soviet Academy of Sciences clinic but it's refused to admit Sakharov who's had two heart attacks his wife said.(3 2200 20/5/83)

On May 10th 1983 ITN reported that Alexander Solzhenitsyn was in London to receive the Templeton Religious Prize. Solzhenitsyn is probably the best known of all Soviet dissenters and has appeared frequently in the media. In this case, as ITN reported, Mr Solzhenitsyn was warning the West about the Soviet threat. First however, ITN reported on the

campaign to free dissident Anatoly Scharansky from jail in the USSR. Two Conservative MPs had visited the Soviet Embassy in London where,

Journalist: the two were told that he was a spy and would stay in his Soviet jail.

Conservative MP: I was bitterly disappointed because we didn't even get the basic question of human rights allowing correspondence between his wife and his mother who lives in Russia to be allowed.

Correspondent: Sir Hugh, you've had dealings before with these people. Were they colder today than in the past, was there any indication of a change of heart?

Sir Hugh Fraser: We got into the Embassy and were told nyet, nyet, nyet on every point.(3 2200 10/5/83)

Then Solzhenitsyn's speech was reported.

Solzhenitsyn said the world was facing catastrophe because man had forgotten God. He said Russia was determined to annihilate religion by force while the West had turned to materialism. He said nuclear weapons gave a false sense of security.(3 2200 10/5/83)

BBC conducted an interview with Solzhenitsyn on May 11th. Like ITN, his comments about the Soviet Union were linked to a story about dissidence.

The Soviet news agency TASS said today that Andrei Sakharov, the dissident scientist and human rights campaigner, can't leave the Soviet Union because he knows too many state and military secrets. Sakharov's wife said earlier this week that he would emigrate to the West from his present internal exile in Russia if the authorities granted him a visa.

Today, in an exclusive interview for Newsnight Russia's most celebrated exile, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, spoke out about the evil Soviet communism represents and about the West's failure to combat it morally and spiritually. Solzhenitsyn also spoke out in defence of Sergei Kodorovich, arrested on April 7th this year in Moscow for acting as distributor of a fund for prisoners and their families. The fund, run under the jurisdiction

of the Swiss government, distributes earnings from all editions of Solzhenitsyn's classic The Gulag Archipelago. This morning Solzhenitsyn said that Kodorovich's arrest showed that charity in the USSR is taken as treason against the state.(2 Newsnight 11/5/83)[4]

The emphasis on dissent as a theme in news coverage of the Soviet Union deserves comment. Soviet dissent is a form of political activity with little visible support from the general public. Soviet dissident Roy Medvedev, a man who has himself experienced harassment from the Soviet state, writes that in the USSR "socialism as a system claims the consensus of practically the entire population... beyond all doubt the vast majority of the population endorses the Soviet Communist Party"(1980,p51). The American Sovietologist Marshall Shatz notes that "Soviet dissent is confined to relatively isolated individuals and circles within the urban educated elite"(1980,p178).

Peter Ruff, Moscow correspondent for BBC radio, remarks that: "it's interesting to see just how high a percentage of the people appear to support the leadership"[5].

Unlike Poland or South Africa, the dissident movement in the USSR is not, and has never been a mass movement. And if the treatment of Soviet dissenters at the hands of the state may be harsh and sometimes brutal, this and worse is the case with some countries which receive very little human rights coverage. Britain has itself been found guilty of human rights violations in Northern Ireland by the European Court of Human Rights. As Hartley notes however, dissidents in Britain tend to be defined differently in the media:

Of course there are groups and individuals in 'our'

society who also act outside the official channels. But they are not seen as dissidents: they are seen as deviants... The terms used to characterise strikes, direct action and other expressions of dissent concentrate on notions of irresponsibility, irrationality and other mindlessness or bloody-mindedness; there is always the implication of violence (1984, p.84).

It is in this context that the particular newsworthiness of Soviet dissidence is significant. In his study of the North American press, Herman identifies a pattern to the coverage of dissidence and human rights. The quantity of news coverage given to dissidence in any given country, he argues, is generally unrelated to the scale of the event or to the severity of the official response. Furthermore, the quality of coverage, the manner in which dissent is 'made to mean', depends on the political context within which dissent is expressed, rather than factors such as its scale or motivation. Herman argues that the dissident who opposes the social system of an ideological enemy tends to be more newsworthy and will be covered more sympathetically than s/he who opposes the social system of an ideological ally.

The point is strikingly evident in the case of 'martial law' in Poland, which dominated the headlines and aroused the mass media and political leadership to a state of frenzy in early 1981 and 1982. In contrast, martial law imposed in Turkey in 1981-82, accompanied by mass arrests, torture and executions (which threatened to engulf a good part of the trade union leadership by early 1982) aroused little attention and no indignation. 'Frightful abuse' in the enemy sphere equals a 'return to stability' in the client state (1982, p.144).

The Glasgow Media Group refer to an example from BBC's 9 O' Clock News of May 19th, 1980, of coverage of the Turkish military coup that year which nicely illustrates Herman's point:

Turkey has a long border with the Soviet Union on the southern flank of NATO, and the West have been watching with gloom the trouble building up there. So putting aside a few crocodile tears about democracy, most Western observers are quietly pleased that the region looks that much more stable tonight than it did last night(1985,p.7)[6].

In this case the imposition of martial law by an ideological ally was defined on television news as 'that much more stability'.

The important point to note here is not that television news covers dissent in the Soviet Union. Rather, it is the extent to which dissent dominates the definition of Soviet 'reality' which the news constructs. Television news tends to 'speak' about Soviet society from the perspective of the dissident or the emigre, and to ignore or downplay the experiences of ordinary Soviets. Events of little intrinsic newsvalue in the international arena, such as the granting of a visa, are routinely defined as newsworthy if they involve an element of Soviet dissent. On the other hand, during the sample period there was no coverage of the presence of human rights as defined by the Soviets themselves. Such themes as the state's commitment to full employment, the prioritising of health care and education, or the maintenance of low basic prices are rarely reported, even in items which are specifically addressed to describing Soviet society.

To illustrate this, we will refer to an example from the routine news sample. The children's news programme Newsround marked President Reagan's European visit of June 1982 with a special item which set out to show "what life is like on

either side of the Iron Curtain (1/1/19 1/7/82). The room focussed on the city of Berlin, the eastern part of which, if not part of the Soviet Union, was unambiguously labelled as "the Russian system". Firstly, President Reagan's visit to Europe was defined in terms of America's "vital role" as protector of the Western countries.

President Reagan's visit is important because since the Second World War America has played a vital role of backing countries on the West of the Iron Curtain. Countries in the East look to the Soviet Union - Russia - for support. America and the West say there's no freedom under the Russian system. The people can't speak out against the government and there are no elections. But the Russians say that under their system - communism - everyone is equal. The difference between the two is clear in Germany.

The account which follows juxtaposes positive images of the West with negative images of the East and 'communism'. For example, both NATO and Warsaw Pact forces occupy Berlin. They have done so since 1945 for complex historical reasons. As this is explained to the audience the journalist makes an important distinction between the military forces on both sides.

West Berlin is still an occupied city, under the control of the allied forces of Britain, France and America. And once a year they put on a huge military parade. It's a show of force, a reminder to the Russians on the other side of the Wall, and a way of assuring the West Berliners who turn up to enjoy the parade that they are well protected.

In West Berlin military occupation protects and assures people against "the Russians on the other side". They "enjoy" the military presence. East Berlin, however,

is still as much an occupied city as West Berlin. In theory no East German troops are allowed inside the city boundary. Here, it's the Russians who rule.

The differences in language are not merely semantic. To 'protect' from 'the Russians' is one thing, to 'rule' over the Germans is another. The view that the Soviets or the East Berliners might feel themselves in any need of protection is foreclosed. Their forces threaten, while ours protect.

This account can be compared with another, taken from the more overtly authorial form of the television documentary. Documentaries do not claim the neutrality of news journalism, and their authorship - in this case by Jonathan Dimbleby - is often a major attraction of the programme. Nevertheless, Dimbleby's examination of life in East and West Germany illustrates what might be said in a comparison. In Taking Sides, Part 1 of Dimbleby's series, The Cold War Game, he employs the symbol of the military parade to comment on the 'human rights' issue. In the course of this account, the construction of meaning around the image of the military parade is significantly different from that of Newsround.

In Berlin the Western allies parade their military might to approval, and to disgust from a small group which turns its back in silence on a military extravaganza which a growing number of young West Germans detest. And then, in a city which is said to be a symbol of Western democracy, the police move in.

On camera we see the protesters beaten and dragged away as Dimbleby observes that:

In the cold war game it's only the authorities on the other side who treat their dissidents thus. This was not a question of 'human rights', but a 'minor incident' that was swiftly dealt with.

Without taking sides, this account challenges the absoluteness of the concepts of human rights and dissidence, directing the audience to the possibility of differing interpretations of the terms. The implied suggestion is that if communists do not have a monopoly on brutality and repression, the West does not have a monopoly on democracy and human rights.

Newsround's account of life on either side of the Wall presented an image of West Berlin as a place of gaiety and affluence.

West Berlin is like an island of Western life in a communist country. The city's main street, the Kurfurstendamm, is busy and lively, full of cafes and luxury hotels. The shops are expensive and they sell the same range of goods as any other Western city.

In East Berlin by contrast:

what they couldn't get away from were the same problems and shortages which dog the other East bloc nations. The goods may look alright in the windows but they are expensive, the choice is highly restricted, and the quality doesn't match up to the West.

Such an account is internally contradictory. There are expensive shops on both sides, according to the journalist, but only in the East are they defined negatively. One might infer that in the East there are no cafes or luxury hotels, and that in the West there are no shortages or problems. Western problems like unemployment and poverty (from which West Berlin is not exempt) are omitted from the comparison, as are advantages of 'communism' such as full employment and low basic prices for the necessities of life. Throughout the account economic indicators which might construct a negative

image of the west, such as unemployment statistics, were excluded, as were those which might have constructed a positive image of 'the East', such as the fact that with 17 million people East Germany was at this time higher in the league of industrial producers than Britain. It was noted that:

East Germany is a rigidly-controlled society. There's no choice of schooling but it is strongly competitive and for those who don't fit in the possibilities are limited.

There were no references to the 20 million unemployed in Western Europe at this time, whose possibilities, from some perspectives, might be regarded as at least equally limited.

Television news is not, of course, a medium with the space to provide a meticulous comparison of every aspect of life in East and West, and no-one would expect it to do so. Nevertheless, the selective, comparative approach adopted in this example consistently led to the presentation of 'the Russian system' negatively, and the West as 'an island of life and luxury'.

Dimbleby's report, to which we have already referred, illustrates some of the things that could have been said in an account of life in East Germany. He, for example, presents an East German family, whom he describes as average, working and living apparently 'normal' lives. They watch television, drink beer, and go holidays. For a three bedroom flat they pay:

20 marks weekly, or roughly £5 from a family income of £100. Food, which is heavily subsidised, costs them about £25 a week. The price of basics like bread, meat,

potatoes and milk has been frozen for twenty years; like fares, gas and electricity. After paying for all their necessities they save the equivalent of £25 a week which they put in the bank. The family give an appearance of genuine contentment.

Dimbleby's account presents a society "where there's no freedom" from another perspective. From a different perspective an alternative image can be constructed. In Newsround, only the problems of the system and the dislikes of its inhabitants are newsworthy.

If you asked an East German what he disliked most about his country, he'd probably tell you the restrictions on travel abroad... the shortage of housing is serious.

No East German was asked what he liked most about his country, nor were there any references to a serious shortage of housing in West Berlin. There were no amendments to the simple East/West, bad/good juxtaposition being constructed in the account. We are presented with an image of socialist society as seen from the limited perspective of free market values.

Similar points emerged in coverage of the deaths of Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko (see Appendix 3.1 for texts of whole items). For example, references to the Soviet economy in these items (see Appendix 3.2 for a list of all references) mentioned only its negative aspects.

The crisis which erupted in Poland in 1980 leading to the emergence of Solidarity revealed the chronic economic ills of the entire Soviet system. (Channel 4 1900 11/11/82)

While the Polish crisis of the early 80s was reported to be symptomatic of 'chronic illness' in 'the entire Soviet

system', there were no references to the positive experience of countries like East Germany and Hungary. The Soviet economy was defined only as a series of immense problems.

Whoever makes it to the top will have to cope with the immense economic problems, which is one legacy Mr Brezhnev has left to his country's workers. His policies of rigid control have made this year's growth rate the worst since the war, while the harvest has been the fourth bad one in a row - worse than in Czarist times. (1 2100 11/11/82)

there's a flagging economy and a perennial grain shortage...in a flagging economy there's zero economic growth.(3 2200 11/11/82)

The day to day problems [Andropov] inherited were ingrained in Soviet life. Queues, shoddy goods, erratic deliveries, bad planning, inefficiency, but most ingrained and insidious of all, corruption and exploitation of privilege, something his predecessor Mr Brezhnev had been renowned for. (4 1900 10/2/84)

Some variations appeared in accounts of how successful Yuri Andropov had been in his well-publicised if short-lived drive to improve the functioning of the Soviet economy. Three different journalistic assessments of Andropov's achievement were presented. BBC news stated that "bosses were fired":

there was limited success.(1 2100 10/2/84)

Channel 4 news was more generous in its assessment, reporting:

impressive signs of progress in the first few months of his leadership...last year official figures showed a four percent increase in national output.(4 1900 10/2/84)

This was the only reference to the Soviet economy in any of the coverage which could be described as 'positive'. News

at len, in contrast, maintained that:

Andropov was too ill in his sixteen months to change anything in the Soviet Union. He left to his successor all the legacies, the ambitions and the problems he inherited. (3 2200 10/2/84)

The Soviet economy, of course, has many problems. Compared to the advanced capitalist economies it remains relatively undeveloped. Labour productivity is low. Shortages of labour and materials lead to bottlenecks and the inefficient use of resources. These problems are compounded by corruption and slow-moving bureaucratic machinery.

But the Soviet economy also has a number of positive features. Even by the standards of success of Western governments - which are not the only proclaimed goals of a centralised socialist economy - the Soviet Union has not performed disastrously. The prices of basic items are low and stable. Inflation is zero, 'booms and slumps' are unknown, growth is constant, there is full unemployment and an extensive social welfare system, and standards of living have increased continuously since World War II. Such claims could not be made of the British economy. Martin Walker, Moscow correspondent for the Guardian, comments on his own surprise at arriving in the USSR and finding his accepted image of Soviet economic life challenged.

Staying and working here, it's plain that the dominant theme of most Western analyses of the Soviet Union in the 70's and early 80's - that this place is economically a basket-case, that it's collapsing - is just not true.

It's not collapsing. It's a very stable society. It's one which delivers the goods to its people. Their living standards get a little better every year. Sure there are shortages, gross inefficiencies, gross examples of waste and incompetence, but anybody who knows Scotland or the

North of England or Southern Italy or large swathes of America knows that we're living in a glass house, and we've got to be careful about the kind of stones we're throwing. I think that came as a shock to me - to discover that the system was not only working better than I had read it was, but it also seemed to be capable of change and improvement within its own terms.

Television news, to the extent that it dealt with the Soviet economy as a theme during the periods discussed, tended to reinforce the 'economic basket-case' image.

Coverage of other aspects of Soviet life during the Brezhnev/Andropov/Chernenko sample also focussed on 'problems'. ITN defined the Soviet Union as a "huge political and administrative headache"(3 2200 11/11/82), where:

the Russians themselves are about to become the minority. There are 260 million Soviet citizens. Just 159 million of them live in the Russian republic. The big population explosion is out in Muslim Asia, among the Uzbheks and Kazhaks. That is why the Soviet Union went into Afghanistan.

In addition to the Islamic problem (asserted without substantiation to be the reason for Soviet involvement in Afghanistan), "growing urban problems familiar to the West", were also noted in this item, such as "hooliganism and alcoholism". There was a reference to the problem of the "new class" in Soviet society.

They are privately contemptuous of the political system that deprives them of more than material things. In the history of revolutions it is those who are better off who are the most dangerous.

The images of crisis and impending doom constructed by such comments is an example of a type of reporting criticised by Patrick Cockburn, Moscow correspondent of the Financial Times in the following terms.

Journalists tend to have an attitude towards this country. Often if you look at a headline it says 'Soviets face crisis'. It's usually not true. This whole system was designed to avoid crisis. Take Central Asia. There are some indications that there's been a greater popularity of Islamic belief and worship, but there isn't much evidence. There's no evidence at all that the Soviets face a crisis because of the Islamic revolution. If you examine any country and see every crack as indicating a current or potential earthquake, you'll produce this caricature. There's a tendency for journalists to dramatise things, but particularly here.

b. The Soviets in the World.

A recurring theme of news about the Soviet Union in recent years has been the war in Afghanistan. In the routine sample discussed here, seven items covered the conflict. Jonathan Steele's experience as a journalist in Kabul leads him to write that Western journalists covering the war are excessively reliant on Western or pro-Western sources, usually diplomatic, for their information. In the Guardian of March 10th, 1986, Steele criticises what he calls "one-sided coverage", based on journalists' uncritical acceptance of anti-Soviet, pro-Mujahideen accounts of the conflict. "When the enemy is the Soviet Union", he writes, "distinctions between hard news, soft news, and outright propaganda seem to lose all validity".

The result is that week after week the Western world is being fed a story of mujaheddin success and Soviet discomfiture which may be far from the truth. The only beneficiaries, at least in the short term, are the mujaheddin and their political and military backers.

British television news coverage of the conflict also tends to rely on these sources, as the following examples illustrate.

Reports from Afghanistan say Muslim rebels have killed 200 members of a crack commando unit on the Soviet-backed Kabul regime. The reports say the fighting happened in the Baktia province last month. The American government now estimates the Russians themselves have had 15,000 casualties since their invasion.(1 2100 7/6/83)

In Afghanistan the Soviet Union along with Afghan government forces has killed thousands of civilians in two bombing offensives according to Western diplomats in Kabul. The campaigns are said to have ended earlier this month. The diplomats say the raids involving up to 50 planes a day over a two-week period were centred on the Western city of Harat and in the Shamali valley north of the capital Kabul. Half of Harat was said to have been destroyed.(3 2200 10/5/83)

It is necessary to recognise the distinction between choosing to use Western sources in such a story, and being compelled by the objective constraints operating in the particular news-gathering situation, as we shall see later on. However, Steele argues that alternatives to official Western sources are available, but tend to be downgraded in coverage.

In coverage of areas where the Soviet Union is not directly involved militarily, such as the Middle East or Central America, it is frequently mentioned as an 'actor'. Here, accounts and interpretations of the Soviet role tend to favour dominant Western definitions of the problem. The Middle East crisis of May 1983 illustrates this.

One year following its invasion of the Lebanon, Israel was anxious to withdraw its troops, for pressing domestic reasons. The Americans suggested that this could be achieved equitably by Israel and Syria both removing their troops. Syria refused, and a confrontation with Israel began to

develop. In our sample, five items of news covered the crisis (the full texts of these items are reproduced in Appendix 3.3).

To see how the US definition of this problem was reproduced as a privileged definition on television news, one has first to note that there were competing approaches available at this time. The US government held that the problem was related to Soviet influence in the region, in line with the general tendency of the Reagan Administration to make sense of world affairs in terms of 'Soviet expansionism'. In particular, the Soviets were alleged to be building-up their military forces in Syria, and urging the Syrian government to reject the US peace plan.

A different perspective on the crisis, and on the Middle East situation in general, appeared in an article by Robert Fisk of the Times on May 13th. Fisk reported that Soviet military supplies to Syria were for defensive purposes only. He agreed that "there are 3,000 Soviet military advisers training the Syrian army. But there are no combat troops in Syria... In Lebanon, no independent witness has yet identified Soviet troops". Fisk went on to point out that Soviet military power in the region was a great deal less impressive than that of NATO.

The multinational force is not made up of United Nations peacekeepers but of troops from the United States, France, Italy and Britain. Beirut has over the past eight months been transformed into what is in effect a NATO base, complete with all the logistics and intelligence apparatus that the Western allies choose to place at its disposal. The waters off Beirut have become, quite literally, a [US] Sixth Fleet anchorage.

In the Guardian of May 14th Jonathan Steele challenged the view that Syria and the Soviets were working closely together.

President Assad is no Soviet lackey...[his] government spends more of its time talking to the American Embassy than to officials from the Soviet mission.

This view was reported once during the sample, on Channel 4 news during an interview with a Middle East expert, Dr. Adeed Dawisha.

Dr Adeed Dawisha: The relation between the Syrians and the Soviet Union is one really of equal allies. This is something which people do not seem to appreciate. The Syrians are not clients of the Soviet Union. They have shown in the past, repeatedly, to be taking independent actions which the Soviets themselves have not agreed to.(4 1900 17/5/83)

However, in the rest of the coverage there was no reference to this view, or to the view of the military balance in the region presented by Fisk. On the other hand, a number of statements of the US view did appear. The US view also formed the basis of the interpretative frameworks within which journalists chose to make sense of the crisis.

There were two reported statements by US political leaders, both asserting a belligerent Soviet role in the crisis, and neither of which were balanced with statements of competing interpretations.

Today Mr Schultz [the US Secretary of State] called on the Soviet Union to get on the side of peace in Lebanon and to support America's attempts to get all foreign troops out.(3 2200 10/5/83)[6]

The American Defence Secretary Mr Casper Weinberger said in New York that the Soviet build-up in Syria made agreement more difficult and increased the danger of war

Journalists' linked "Syrian war-cries" with actual, or implied Soviet support.

Syria has again talked about a new war with Israel over Lebanon. Syria, which is armed and backed by Russia turned down the deal for Israeli troop withdrawal from Lebanon negotiated by the American Secretary of State Mr George Schultz last week. (3 2200 10/5/83)

Syria's war-like noises over Lebanon are probably designed to show the Arab world she is a force to be reckoned with again and to try and make life difficult for the Israelis who desperately want to get their troops home from Lebanon. But even with her new Russian support it's unlikely Syria really wants another war. (3 2200 13/5/83)

Syrian war-cries are backed by an enormous influx of Soviet military equipment. hundreds of T-72 battletanks, artillery pieces and aircraft have replaced the losses of last year's conflict with Israel. (1 2100 16/5/83)

An item about US military aid to Israel, by contrast, was couched in very different terms. On May 19th, it was reported that President Reagan "says he's going to announce in the next few days that America will sell 75 F-15 bombers to Israel"(3 2200 19/5/83). Here there were no references to 'an enormous influx of military equipment'. On the contrary, this sale of weapons (to a country which one year before had used similar equipment to kill an estimated 30,000 civilians in Beirut) was explained by a statement of the official view.

The US Defence Secretary is worried about the Soviet military build-up in Syria.(3 2200 19/5/83)

While Soviet supplies to Syria were reported on the news as the cause of conflict, those from the US to Israel were reported as a response to Soviet build-up. US definitions of

the problem were privileged in coverage[1].

The tendency for television news to prefer certain account over others in coverage of Soviet-related issues was also shown during coverage of the deaths of Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko. To illustrate this we will discuss coverage of two themes repeatedly raised in the background narratives which made up much of this coverage: Soviet military power, and East-West relations.

c. Soviet military power.

Chapter 2 showed that authoritative Western opinion varies on the nature and extent of the Soviet military threat. Television news accounts of Soviet military power tended to reflect those views which maximise the Soviet threat and assume 'worst-case' assessments of Soviet capabilities to be true (a list of references to Soviet military power over the sample is given in Appendix 3.4).

BBC, for example, referred to Soviet military expansion in recent years as "the biggest military build-up the world has ever seen", using this assertion to qualify an image of President Brezhnev as an advocate of disarmament.

President Brezhnev's place in history is assured. The man who advocated disarmament yet presided over the biggest military build-up the world has ever seen.(1
2100 11/11/82

A bigger military build-up, one might wrongly infer from this statement, than that initiated by President Reagan after he came to power in 1980. Elsewhere in the same bulletin it was noted that:

In Brezhnev's final years the Soviet military build-up continued, outstripping NATO in a number of areas.

The item contained no information as to the areas in which NATO is surpassed by the USSR, or their relevance to the overall military balance, or the areas in which NATO outstripped the Soviet Union. There were no references to a NATO military build-up in the narrative, although by November 1982 President Reagan was well advanced in his defence programme. All these factors are important if the viewer is to make an informed appraisal of the 'meaning' of the term 'Soviet military build-up'.

BBC coverage of the Brezhnev funeral picked out Soviet Defence Minister Marshal Ustinov from the leaders standing on the Lenin Mausoleum and identified him as the man who had "presided over an unprecedented military build-up"(1 2100 15/11/82).

BBC then, presented the viewer with an unqualified, uncontextualised image of a Soviet military build-up which is 'unprecedented', 'the biggest the world has ever seen', and 'outstripping NATO in many areas'.

Channel 4 news coverage of Brezhnev's death, referring to the SALT II arms limitation treaty, stated that it had been signed "only after five long years of haggling"

and Russia's military might grew alarmingly.(4 1900 11/11/82)

Soviet military power grew during the 1970s, as did that of the United States. That it grew "alarmingly" is a question

News at Ten referred twice to Soviet defence spending, entering a debate which, as we have seen, occupies a crucial place in the overall debate about the Soviet threat. ITN's account of this issue reinforced 'worst-case' assessments of Soviet defence spending.

It was shown in Chapter 2 that the extent of Soviet defence spending, like Soviet military power in general, can be guessed, calculated, assessed, but not known as a fact. Assessments vary. The 'worst-case' assessment, contained in the British Government's 1982-83 Defence Estimates, was that

Soviet defence expenditure now accounts for some 14-16 percent of GNP in current prices, overtaking the level of any NATO country(p20).

In 1984 NATO acknowledged this estimate to be exaggerated by a factor of two. On television news it appeared without qualification or identification of its source in both of ITN's references to Soviet defence spending.

President Brezhnev was an enthusiastic supporter of detente with the West but under his leadership there was no let up in Soviet military spending. Russia has consistently spent over one eighth of its national income on defence, that's about twice the proportion of most Western countries.

in a flagging economy there's zero economic growth, lagging technology, and 15 percent of production spent on defence.(3 2200 11/11/82)

The source or status of these assessments was not indicated to the viewer, for example by the preface that 'the British Government claims' or 'the CIA estimates'. There was no indication that the figure of '14-16 percent' was a

disputed estimate. There was no reference to the relevant consideration that Soviet GNP is approximately 50 percent that of the United States (850 billion as against 1700 billion dollars in 1976), and that for this reason figures for defence spending as a percentage of GNP have to be qualified. The phrase 'spends twice as much as Western countries' is particularly evocative, but could be qualified by the fact that in hard cash, according to Western bankers, NATO spent 220 billion dollars more than the Warsaw Pact in 1982.

As in the earlier BBC example, the information is presented in such a way as to qualify Brezhnev's policy of detente: 'President Brezhnev supported detente but...'. We might reasonably reconstruct the meaning of the statement in the following way - detente is nice in theory but you can't trust him because he spends over twice the amount of Western countries on defence.

These assessments of Soviet defence spending - one eighth or 15% of GNP, twice the proportion of most Western countries - are the same as those found in the official sources quoted in Chapter 2 above. They were originally produced by the CIA for the US Defence Department under pressure from the conservative Committee on the Present Danger.

Throughout this coverage, there were only two occasions when journalists contextualised images of Soviet military power in terms of Western superiority. In the first example a reference to Soviet military inferiority is included as a brief addendum to an account of what is described as a

"revolution" in Soviet military technology.

Under the leadership of Brezhnev Russia's armed forces have undergone a technological revolution in recent years. Soviet ground forces in Europe have been considerably strengthened by new weapons like the T-72 tanks on display last week in Moscow, and Russia spent vast sums of money on the development of new weapons in space. Large numbers of navigation and communication satellites have been launched, and new radar satellites which can track NATO ships at sea. And in the past decade the Soviet navy has expanded dramatically, with a new ability to project power worldwide.(3 2200 11/11/82)

These images of "dramatic" expansion were contextualised by the observation that Soviet military forces remain inferior to those of the United States.

Russia's purpose with all this technology is to try to catch up with the Americans.

A second counter-example accompanied coverage of Chernenko's death, on the eve of a new round of Geneva arms control talks. One of the major issues at these talks would be the United States planned 'Star Wars' project, the Strategic Defence Initiative. One bulletin presented this account of the military balance in space weapons.

The Russians already have killer satellites to knock out American military satellites, and plans for space stations like this which could serve a number of purposes in war. But by and large the Russians' space technology lags far behind the Americans.(4 1900 11/3/85)

d. East-West relations.

A second major theme of coverage was the state of East-West relations. Journalists tended to concentrate their accounts on two aspects of the problem: the poor state of relations in general, and the fact that no progress had been

made in the area of arms control.

Statements on these issues fell into three categories: those which described the state of East-West relations or anticipated how they would develop; those which ascribed or implied blame for the deterioration of East-West relations to one side or the other; and those which reported the statements of Soviet and Western leaders about East-West relations (a list of all statements is given in Appendix 3.5). An analysis of these statements reveals the journalists' tendency to reproduce dominant (Western) explanations of the East-West 'problem', i.e., that it is essentially a problem located in some aspect or other of Soviet behaviour.

Statements in the first category reflected the changes in East-West relations taking place throughout the period of the sample. On the death of Brezhnev there was a consensus that relations, already at their coolest for many years, would not improve in the near future. As BBC news put it:

any remnants of the old policy of detente will either disappear or go into deep freeze, and the strategic arms reduction talks are hardly likely to produce much(1 2100 11/11/82).

Sixteen months later BBC reflected that "when Brezhnev died neither President Reagan nor Mrs Thatcher went to Moscow. the chill in East-West relations was already too strong for that, and it was to get worse"(1 2100 10/2/84). ITN's coverage of Andropov's death emphasised "how bad Soviet-American relations have become" adding, by way of substantiation:

Since Vice-President Bush flew to Brezhnev's funeral and he and Secretary of State George Schultz talked with Mr Andropov sixteen months ago there's been effectively no contact with the Soviet leadership.(3 2200 10/2/84)

With the passing of another thirteen months, and another change in leadership, it seemed that the new cold war was thawing out. Television news was able to report that "relations are greatly improved since the last such death in the Soviet family"(3 2200 11/3/85). What one journalist had called "the winter of superpower relations" seemed to be giving way to a mild rapprochement.

However, in going beyond the identification of an East-West problem and seeking to explain it journalists emphasised what we shall call Soviet-induced factors. References to the breakdown of detente and the onset of the new cold war tended to focus blame on Soviet actions and Soviet policies.

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan American-Soviet relations went into irreversible decline.(4 1900 11/11/82)

The SALT II treaty was never ratified by Congress. East-West relations were moving into a difficult period, not helped by allegations of Soviet maltreatment of dissidents.(1 2100 11/11/82)

They shot [the Korean airliner] out of the sky, bringing world-wide condemnation down on the Kremlin. East-West contacts were shattered.(1 2100 10/2/84)

These were significant events, but were not in themselves the cause of deteriorating East-West relations. In some respects they were a consequence of that deterioration. The reason given publicly by Presidents Carter and Reagan for the ultimate failure of the SALT II negotiations made no

reference to "Soviet maltreatment of dissidents" but alleged that SALT II would codify Soviet strategic superiority. Similarly, the Korean airline disaster did not "shatter" East-West contacts, but confirmed in the view of some commentators the dangers of a situation where high-level contacts were virtually non-existent.

Other statements blamed individual Soviet leaders for the crisis. Brezhnev, one journalist remarked, "never quite managed to convince President Reagan's America that the old men in the Kremlin were genuinely interested in peace, cooperation and detente"(4 1900 11/11/82).

BBC news wondered if Andropov's successor would make "any real effort to get the arms talks going again"(1 2100 10/2/84). The implication that Andropov had not made such an effort took no account of the views of those such as Denis Healey, who argued after the death of Andropov that:

It's fair to say that Andropov tried very hard to improve relations both with China and with the West. He failed because neither took the hand offered out. (3 2200 10/2/84)

One bulletin reported that under Chernenko:

the United States remained in Soviet-imposed quarantine and Mr Reagan in his pre-election campaign could do no right.

In these accounts blame for the East-West 'problem' is attributed to aspects of Soviet behaviour - Soviet policies, Soviet leaders. This explanatory framework was exemplified in the following account.

in order to express how deeply the United States values
detente, despite Mr Brezhnev's harsh words last week,
the Administration will probably send its second-highest
ranking member Vice-President Bush [to the funeral].(3
2200 11/11/82)

The United States, we are told, "deeply wants detente",
despite what are described as Mr Brezhnev's "harsh words"
(which were not reported). The President's refusal to go to
the Brezhnev funeral, and his dispatch of the Vice-President
instead are presented as evidence of his sincerity.

Mr Reagan's attitudes to the USSR were not a secret.
Nowhere in these bulletins was it noted that Mr Reagan was
the first United States' President in 40 years not to meet
his Soviet counterpart, or that his first meeting with any
member of the Soviet Government had been with Andrei Gromyko
only weeks before the Presidential election of 1984. On the
contrary, it was the Soviets who had "imposed quarantine".

Statements about East-West relations which appeared after
Andropov's death reinforced the argument advanced by the
Reagan Administration for the fact that relations had not
advanced during his brief tenure in office, i.e., that he was
unfit and an invalid.

The feeling in Washington is that with the uncertainty
over Mr Andropov's health now over, a major obstacle to
ending the present freeze in relations between the two
superpowers may have been cleared away.(4 1900 10/2/84)

Inside and outside of the Administration there's a sense
here of a new opening and opportunity for dialogue with
the Soviet Union. And whether or not the President goes
to Moscow he's likely to grasp at it.(1 2100 10/2/84)

The US Administration is said to be 'grasping' at the
opportunity to open a dialogue. Western demands for

'improvements' in Soviet behaviour were reported uncritically, as in the following examples.

the United States will be looking to the new leadership for some signal of a willingness to ease the present tension.(1 2100 11/11/82)

Some Western leaders are starting to demand some kind of sign from the Kremlin about its promised goodwill...Mrs Thatcher is likely to call for genuine evidence that the Russians are serious about multilateral disarmament.(1 2100 15/11/82)

In the context of the East-West debate it is to be expected that Western leaders should have made such statements and attempted to present themselves to their own citizens as sincere peacemakers. Television news assumed the sincerity of these claims, although alternative analyses, in which the Western role would not have been perceived in such a positive way, were available.

Consider the following accounts taken from coverage of the death of Leonid Brezhnev.

For President Reagan the hope of a new start for East-West relations.(1 2100 11/11/82)

Mr Andropov said he wanted relations based on full equality, non-interference, mutual respect and what he called a revitalising of the international atmosphere.(3 2200 15/11/82)

Both statements contain expressions of a desire for improved East-West relations. Both are typical examples of the diplomatic style. But there is a subtle difference in their presentation. The first statement presents a fact - President Reagan hopes for a new start. There is no suggestion that this might be public relations.

Mr Andropov, on the other hand, is reported as saying that he wants improvement, a statement which can be 'read' in a number of ways, according to wider assumptions about the credibility of Soviet views. The assumption of good intentions on the part of the US Administration is reinforced by the media presentation.

Consider too the following account of Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at the funeral of Konstantin Chernenko.

Mr Gorbachev repeated the well-oiled formula about Russia's readiness to maintain neighbourly relations with all countries.(4 1900 13/11/85)

There were, by contrast, no references to 'well-oiled formulae' in the statements of Western leaders such as Mr Reagan or Mrs Thatcher. Their statements of a desire for detente, of a hope for improved relations with the USSR, were never 'made sense' of in this manner.

We noted that as Gorbachev followed Chernenko, relations were improving. Coverage accounted for the change in terms of the "new, younger man in the Kremlin".

The West will be hoping that in time the fact that there's a younger man in charge now in Moscow, hopefully one who's more receptive to new ideas, and with the prospect of 20 years or more at the top with which to carry them out, that that will all lead to a significant improvement in East-West relations.(3 2200 13/11/85)

Despite the optimistic tone, and references to "the man with new ideas", the dominant interpretative framework remains. Western leaders are assumed to be 'hoping for a significant improvement' in relations, an improvement which

is assumed to have been thwarted by recent Soviet leaderships.

Throughout the sample there were only two references to what we shall call Western-induced causes in the deterioration of East-West relations. The first of these occurred in the context of Channel 4's interview with the Soviet commentator Vladimir Dunaev, who was asked if he thought that following the death of Brezhnev

the rather tough sounding statements and the tough stance of President Reagan and the cold war sentiments of his Administration [would] increase the likelihood that a hardliner will emerge to combat this policy of the Americans?(4 1900 15/11/82)

Clearly, the politics of the Reagan Administration are recognised in this question to be a factor in East-west relations, but they were referred to in this context at only one other point in coverage. This came in ITN's account of Brezhnev's political career.

Relations with the United States had gone from good to bad under the Carter Administration. When Ronald Reagan got to the White House they went from bad to worse. Brezhnev now faced a man who was also conservative, who also kept his guard up, and who believed that in economic and military competition it would be the Soviet system that failed.(3 2200 11/11/82)

The account acknowledges a US role in making East-West relations go from 'good to bad and from bad to worse'. The same item also stated that "Brezhnev did not want an arms race with the United States". In so far as these references did not blame Soviet-induced factors for the new cold war they qualified the general tendency of television news to reinforce the dominant Western account of the East-West

problem.

e. The Enemy Within.

We turn finally to a special category of coverage: that which reports Soviet relations with Britain. The routine sample contained 34 items in this sub-category (13 concerned with Soviet attitudes to the Falklands conflict). Generally, the USSR appears in this type of item as a protagonist, a threat or an enemy, often in the context of official statements such as that of June 22nd 1982 when the Conservative Government published its annual defence White Paper, setting out the priorities of UK defence policy for the coming year. Following as it did so soon after the conclusion of the Falklands War the 1982 Paper was expected to be controversial. Would there be, for example, a review of the government's already announced decision to cut the Navy, given its successes in the South Atlantic? Would there be a greater emphasis in the future on conventional as opposed to nuclear weapons? The principal conclusion of the 1982 Defence Paper, notwithstanding these debates, was that "the main threat to the security of the United Kingdom is from the nuclear and conventional forces of the Soviet Union and her Warsaw Pact allies".

The White Paper was reported on five bulletins, and while there was some reference to the intra-service debate about the role of the Navy, there was no media discussion of this statement of the threat[8].

The Government's White Paper still treats the Soviet Union as the main threat to Britain.(1 1740 22/6/82)

Today's White Paper reasserts the Government's view that the main threat to British security still comes from Russia and her Warsaw Pact allies.(3 1715 22/6/82)

On May 20th, 1982, the Diplock Commission's report on internal security was published. Its conclusions identified "left-wing" and Soviet subversion as the main internal threats to national security. Reported on four bulletins throughout the day, the Commission's conclusions escaped analysis or discussion. The following was typical of their presentation.

Britain's democratic institutions are under challenge from new subversive groups, mainly on the extreme left, according to the report of the Diplock Commission on security. The report says that at the same time the threat from the Soviet bloc intelligence services remains strong. (3 1745 20/5/82)

Another kind of story in which the USSR regularly appears is the 'spy scandal'. Sometimes Soviets working in Britain are accused of spying and expelled (see Chapter 6 below) and sometimes this news is concerned with British citizens alleged to be working for the Soviets or their allies. These stories, even if they do not refer to the Soviet Union directly, usually construct images of a threat.

A variant on the spy theme concerns coverage of industrial espionage. In June 1983 ITN carried two special reports on the illegal export of computers to COMECON countries. Items reported a "pattern of successful hi-tech smuggling undertaken by Soviet bloc intelligence services"(4 1900 1/6/83), and a "complex fraud to smuggle computers into the Soviet bloc"(4 1900 8/6/83).

the only exceptions to these images in the sample appeared in the context of news about British-Soviet trade. In June 1982 the British and American governments fell out over the US ban on contracts for the Soviet gas pipeline then under construction. The ban threatened to affect companies working in Britain, and was rejected by the Thatcher Government.

The British Government said today that the American ban exports of high technology for the Soviet gas pipeline is unacceptable, so it will protect British companies engaged in such sales. The Trade Minister Mr. Peter Rees is in Washington to tell the Americans about the damage they're causing.(3 2200 30/6/82)

Such stories, when they appear, arguably qualify images of the USSR as a threat by presenting instead a country with whom Britain can work and trade. During the sample there were two items of this kind.

During the Falklands conflict, there were a number of news items concerned with Soviet attitudes (13, between May 1st and June 30th)[9]. These generally took the form of speculation as to the existence and extent of Soviet aid to the Argentine junta. The available evidence on this question suggested that while the Soviets supported the Argentine sovereignty claim, in accordance with UN Resolution 2065, they were not giving financial or military assistance to Galtieri's strongly anti-Soviet, anti-communist government.

On May 19th the Financial Times noted that:

Soviet geographical maps recognised the existence of an Argentinian claim to the Falkland Islands long before the Argentine invasion of the islands six weeks ago but at no stage in the dispute has the Soviet Union endorsed Argentina's original invasion of the islands.

on May 20th, the Financial Times reported that:
Thus far the Soviet Union has taken a strongly anti-British and anti-US line over the Falklands and coupled this with general expressions of support for Latin America, the Third World at large, and the Argentinian people. At no stage however, has it endorsed the Galtieri regime and might indeed be embarrassed if the Right-wing military regime made an open request for Soviet arms.

Following the US embargo on grain sales to the USSR as a protest against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the Soviets had turned to Argentina for grain imports. In 1981 15 million tons were purchased from this source. On May 24th the Daily Telegraph reported:

an unexplained halt in Soviet grain purchases abroad... Soviet grain purchases from Argentina totalled 15 million tons last year. But so far Moscow has only bought eight million tons from Argentina this year, and has not made a major move in world grain markets for more than a month.

On June 4th the Financial Times observed that:

The decision to halt further Soviet grain orders at the outset of the Falkland Islands dispute contrasts with the strongly pro-Argentine position taken by Soviet spokesmen and the media.

Several television news items were devoted to speculation about the forms and extent of aid to the junta, but none reported this evidence. On May 19th, when the Financial Times had reported "no endorsement" by the Soviets of the invasion, Newsnight presented an item in which the Soviet role in support of Argentina was said to 'mirror' US support for Britain. The report elevated the conflict to the status of a superpower confrontation in the following manner.

Well as the crisis apparently inches closer to a major

it may suck in other countries, even the superpowers, with American support for Britain mirrored by Soviet support for Argentina.(2 Newsnight 19/5/82)

There was no evidence at the time that such an escalation of the conflict was imminent, or that the Soviets were 'mirroring' US support for Britain in their relations with Argentina. The obvious lack of Soviet support for Argentina was defined as "conspicuous restraint".

Now so far the Soviet Union appears to have been conspicuously restrained, for whatever reason, and it is still not known how much military intelligence the Argentines are receiving from Moscow. But this week another communications satellite was launched which could be used for intelligence-gathering over the South Atlantic.

The observed 'restraint' of the USSR does not prevent the journalist from implying that Argentina is receiving some kind of military aid - "it's still not known how much" - via a Soviet satellite monitoring the conflict.

The USSR monitored the conflict by satellites and other means, in this respect sharing an interest with the USA. The Falklands war was the first post-war conflict fought at sea, with many new weapons and tactics on display. Both superpowers attended as spectators, and several news items took this as their theme.

The launching of a Soviet satellite referred to in the Newsnight example above was also covered by ITN. ITN's coverage initially placed the Soviet satellite in the context of similar monitoring activity by the USA.

This latest launch matches the American Big Bird spy satellite put up last Wednesday by the US air force at a

cost of 80 million dollars to keep watch on the Argentine fleet. The Americans have also just changed the orbits of two top secret Keyhole 11 satellites operated by the CIA so that they can cross the Falklands twice a day when the sun is low on the horizon.(3 1300 17/5/82)

There was however a distinct change of emphasis in a later item that day. Gone were references to the US Big Bird satellites, to their cost and to the fact that they preceded the Soviet satellite in their stationing above the Falklands. "One of the [Soviets'] biggest satellites" became "a giant spy satellite...that... passes low right over the Falkland Islands twice a day"(3 1745 17/5/82) (see figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. "A giant spy satellite... passes low right over the Falkland Islands twice a day"(3 1745 17/5/82)



2. Making Soviet News.

A number of factors shape the images of the Soviet Union which Western media tend to produce. One is the set of attitudes and ideological assumptions which some journalists bring to their work. As Patrick Cockburn puts it, "it's evident that there's an ideological bias amongst journalists. That's quite obvious". He refers specifically to journalists working in Moscow, but the point is equally valid for those based in Britain who report on Soviet affairs. Cockburn continues:

There are people who think that it's a deeply evil society. When you go back to England or America what is deeply shocking is the demonology about the USSR.

BBC news' Moscow correspondent, Brian Hanrahan, remarks: "the impression I've always had in the past is that people who've written about the Soviet Union have done so with undue suspicion". Peter Ruff, his colleague, acknowledges that "a lot of journalists come here with the feeling that this is somewhere special, it's dangerous, it's a threat, and that it must be taken very seriously indeed".

The presence of 'ideological bias' amongst some television journalists is clearly shown in the language they employ to describe and make sense of the Soviet Union.

In BBC's coverage of the 1982 May Day parade it was reported that the Party slogans carried by the participants were announced "weeks in advance every year, and every year they duly and ritualistically appear". The phrase "duly and ritualistically" would not appear in coverage of a British state occasion, such as the Queen's Speech. Journalists would

not be likely to report that 'the words are written by the Government weeks in advance, and every year they duly and ritualistically appear in the mouth of the Queen'.

BBC's coverage of the death of Leonid Brezhnev described him as:

the ruler of Russia...arguably the most powerful man in the world...a man who's dominated the communist world for so long...the man who embraced detente, but made sure democratic stirrings in his own empire were crushed. (1 2100 11/11/82)

ITN's newscaster stated that Brezhnev "kept the Soviet Union a garrison state. Under him there was no Russian spring. He had only one answer to the change that threatened his system. Stop it!" (3 2200 11/11/82).

In ITN's coverage of the state funeral of Leonid Brezhnev the newscaster gave an account of meetings which took place after the funeral between George Bush, Francis Pym (then British Foreign Secretary), and Yuri Andropov, the new General Secretary of the CPSU. There was, he said, "a long receiving line in the Kremlin, of 32 heads of state, 15 prime ministers, and just about every foreign minister who could get there" (3 2200 15/11/82). Then, over Soviet-supplied film of the funeral procession and the ceremonies afterwards, the following commentary was given:

Intent on being there were the Polish puppet General Jaruzelski, who was among those who queued patiently for their handshake. And also Cuba's bearded Fidel Castro. Their new master was holding a party. One of the few non-communist faces Soviet viewers would recognise was Mrs Gandhi, with Afghanistan on her mind. And she bowed to Brezhnev's picture.

They came to Red Square today to bury Brezhnev, and not particularly to praise him. All who were there were

there by official invitation. So it is when dictators die. Others were there by orders.

His old friend had come, Indira Gandhi who spoke her mind, and the clients who didn't - Jaruzelski from Poland, Castro from Cuba and Yasser Arafat.

And his widow Victoria, his daughter and his son said goodbye in an older ritual than the atheistic state allowed.

The terms used to describe the principal actors in this performance reflect anti-Soviet, anti-communist stereotypes. As to the validity of these labels, Fidel Castro, explicitly identified as 'a client who doesn't speak his mind', has frequently adopted an independent foreign policy line vis a vis the Soviet Union. Indeed, he boycotted the later funeral of Konstantin Chernenko because, according to Channel 4 news at the time, "relations with Moscow" were "strained over Central America"(4 1900 13/3/85). Yasser Arafat, also reportedly 'a client who doesn't speak his mind', is not even a communist, nor is the PLO a communist organisation. On the contrary, the greatest proportion of PLO funds come from the oil-rich, pro-Western Arab states.

In coverage of the funeral of Yuri Andropov, BBC2's Newsnight reported, in voice-over to shots of the Kremlin reception, that "after the funeral, Mr Chernenko held court, receiving first his European satraps Kadar of Hungary, Jaruzselski of Poland and the others"(2 Newsnight 14/2/84)

When Andropov died he was described as "a hardman as far back as 1956" and "a former secret police chief"(1 2100 10/2/84). In another bulletin:

the KGB hardman...no friend to dissidents.(4 1900 10/2/84)

President George Bush who has never, as far as is known, been described on British television news as 'the CIA hardman', although he was director of the CIA during the Ford Administration. Such language 'makes sense' of the relations between the USSR and its allies in terms which might be taken for granted in Conservative Central Office, but are far from being a 'neutral' discourse.

However, the employment of ideologically-loaded language in news coverage of the USSR is not universal. ITN's coverage of the Andropov funeral eschewed negative descriptive labels.

Pride of place went to the Communist leaders of Eastern Europe, with Kadar of Hungary, Jaruzelski of Poland, Ceasesceau of Romania well to the fore. And then Russia's allies around the world like Fidel Castro.(3 2200 14/2/84)

In this example, the language of 'clients', 'dictators', 'puppets' and 'masters' was replaced by distinctly less evocative terms such as 'allies'. Many journalists appear to reject the use of cold war terminology.

However, the attitudes and assumptions of journalists - their ideological 'biases' - are not the only factor in shaping negative 'images of the enemy'. Many journalists acknowledge that themes which are absent from Soviet news in general are of legitimate interest to their viewers and readers. They agree, for example, that the lifestyle and habits of the ordinary Soviet citizen, in addition to the dissident/refusenik/dissenter, are newsworthy and should be reported, but that there are constraints affecting their ability to do so. One such journalist is Brian Hanrahan, who

considers his job as a Moscow correspondent for the BBC to contain two aspects. The first is:

the political reporting, the stuff you'd get out of any society but that's important here because you're dealing with a country which has a big effect on the world. So there's that, and all the things that have a direct bearing on that, like the economy.

However, a second aspect of Hanrahan's job, as he sees it:

is the unknown factor. We don't know a lot about this country, but because it has a big effect on everybody there's a lot of interest in knowing about it. People want to know a lot about Soviet life, because it's a completely different system in every way: the fact that there are a lot of different cultures here, how they run things, how they make things work, is all a challenge to the rest of the world. Finding out how they do it, how their social organisation works, how advanced they are, is all of interest just by itself.

Peter Ruff believes that a part of his job is "to try and describe to people in the West what life is like here, and to explain Soviet policy". Patrick Cockburn finds that:

Western people are interested in Soviet life. If you go anywhere in Britain, people do not want a very long conversation about the Soviet attitude to Star Wars. They are interested in what the Soviets get paid, what their houses are like, what they wear, if they have difficulty in getting clothes, what their education is like, what is it like when they go to a doctor? People in the West are interested in hearing how people live here, and that's an interest correspondents should be able to satisfy.

Why then, are such themes neglected? Many of the correspondents argue that they are constrained by factors over which they have no control, which confront them as 'givens' in the work of gathering news about the Soviet Union. Brian Hanrahan claims that his ability to produce human interest or 'life-style' pieces about the Soviet Union

is heavily constrained by the fact that he cannot take pictures without getting official permission.

What you get at the end of the day in terms of human interest is what the Soviet government deems suitable. So your view of the Soviet Union can be controlled very easily. If I go to a factory, I have no idea whether it's a typical factory or not.

He adds:

When I have asked officially if I can go somewhere and film something the answer is no, you have no permission to do this. A typical Soviet house is not on the agenda, because they think it will reflect badly on their society, it might not look well to people in the West who are used to a different standard.

The Soviet reluctance to deal with Western journalists in general has contributed, Hanrahan believes, to the negative coverage it has received over the years.

In some ways I don't think the Soviet Union gives itself a fair press. It cuts itself off so much from the world. It doesn't tell about the characteristics of Soviet society that might make it attractive to outsiders. It leaves itself open to all this critical reporting because it won't allow people to come in and see it as it is, with the pluses and the minuses.

In addition, feature-type, human interest stories about the USSR are more difficult for broadcasting journalists than their press colleagues. The technology and grammar of television (and to a lesser extent radio) demands material which the Moscow correspondent cannot always provide.

Hanrahan stresses:

To do human interest stories I must have co-operation, I must have help from the Soviet authorities. On the other hand, I can do politics, whatever happens, with or without co-operation. The story comes out of your head and you can illustrate it with visual material from some other source, but human interest stories must come out of a camera. I can do politics without help, I can't do

human interest without help. I am not a journalist.

According to some journalists the existence of these constraints are at least partly responsible for the tendency of Western media coverage to focus on the themes of dissidence and dissent. "If there was greater access", says John Tusa of the BBC, "coverage would be better". By creating an 'information gap' in the 1970s and early 1980s refuseniks, dissidents and other opponents of the Soviet state - almost by default, the argument goes - filled the space. Patrick Cockburn explains it this way:

The Soviets complain that in the late 70s and afterwards the foreign media here were obsessed with dissidents and refuseniks and so forth. To some extent there's some merit in that. You could say that the amount of reporting of these themes gives an exaggerated opinion of the numbers involved in these movements. On the other hand they do exist, and secondly, in a political vacuum this was the only type of activity going on. If you have a wholly inert political leadership the spotlight falls on the only signs of activity.

By placing these obstacles all they've done in the past is to ensure that correspondents often rely on dissidents or whoever for opinions. If you take those blocks [where the journalists, diplomats and others in the foreign community live] an ordinary Russian can't walk into them without being stopped by the militiaman. The people who have absolutely no fear of coming in are people who are dissident, because they've got nothing to lose. Ordinary Soviets or members of the Party will not want to come here, so automatically it's much easier to have someone who's outwith the ordinary anyway come to the office or the flat. That's the way it works.

Martin Walker of The Guardian makes a similar point.

I think coverage in the past has been inadequate, and I think a lot of that's been the Soviets fault. They were such a closed society for so long that in the 70s coverage became dominated by dissidents.

Thus, journalists who are concerned to construct what they believe to be a more balanced image of the USSR, to address

bureaucratic obstructionism and other constraints imposed by the Soviets over which they have no control. Nik Gowing, ITN's Soviet correspondent described his negotiations with the Soviet authorities for access to the USSR at the time of the 27th Congress as an "enormously long, tortuous path. In true Soviet-style", he added, "everything has to be done in advance". He said that stories which involved travelling outside of Moscow could take up to nine months to organise.

Peter Ruff argues that the organisation of Soviet society makes it difficult for him to check stories and verify their accuracy.

You can't check facts with Soviet people. First of all, because they don't know them as well as you do. Secondly, they're told to be very careful of foreigners, and Westerners in particular. There are always stories in the media about Western secret service infiltration of the foreign community[10]. There's also a new law which makes it illegal for a foreigner to be given any official information. The state determines what is official information. The law is now established in the criminal code - you don't pass on any information or give any help to foreigners without official permission.

The potential of this law for limiting the freedom of journalists to gather news is considerable, a point also made by Hanrahan:

There's a limited area you can gather news from. A lot of the things you can do elsewhere you can't do here. You read the morning papers, you read the evening papers, you watch Vremya [the main television news programme in the USSR], you take notes on what is said, and it all comes from officially-controlled sources. You very rarely get any first-hand information. Here there is almost nothing as an alternative to government sources. If you go out to try and cross-check stories, you're getting into the realm of espionage.

On the other hand, neither Ruff nor Hanrahan, like many

Western journalists in the USSR, speak Russian, which must be considered a self-imposed constraint of no small significance. The BBC, like many Western news organisations in Moscow, only functions by employing Russian interpreters to monitor the Soviet press every day. In addition, the Soviet news agency TASS produces English texts of all major stories.

Western journalists are also isolated by the fact that they are required by the Soviet authorities to reside, together with diplomats, in special apartment blocks, separated from the Soviet population both physically and in their life-styles.

The degree to which these kinds of constraints affect the journalist clearly depends on the individual's ability and inclination to establish the kinds of contacts necessary for journalistic work in general. Some correspondents learn Russian and acquire a sufficient number of Soviet contacts to construct reasonably accurate and reliable stories. Inevitably, however, some journalists are better at this 'routine' task than others.

There are further bureaucratic and diplomatic constraints affecting journalists in the Soviet Union which do not exist for foreign correspondents in other countries. The BBC, for example, is tightly restricted in the number of personnell it can have in Moscow. As a consequence, journalistic staff are heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the bureau. Peter Ruff explains.

the resident correspondent has to be bureau chief, administrator, psychiatrist, personell officer, accountant and everything else, as well as being a journalist. This directs a lot of time away from pure journalism and researching stories.

Other bureaucratic constraints include the requirement that journalists, if they wish to travel more than forty kilometres from the centre of Moscow in order to do a story, must ask for permission two days in advance. "And when you get there", says Ruff, "whatever you do will be monitored by Foreign Ministry 'mindors', as we call them".

On a working trip they insist on going with you, and have a sort of veto on what you do and how you do it - not necessarily a political one, but it means that you can only do what they allow you to do. You have to plan a trip weeks in advance, and when the date comes for going there may well be another story keeping you in Moscow.

There are technical constraints which inhibit broadcasting journalists in Moscow. They are, for example, denied the use of direct-dial telephones, which means that calls have to be booked in advance, often on poor-quality lines. While this is not an insurmountable problem in Moscow, outside the centre it may take, according to Ruff, several days for a call to be put through, which obviously plays havoc with deadlines and schedules back home. This is one important respect in which broadcasting journalists are worse off than their press colleagues since they cannot, unlike the latter, substitute telephones with telexes. The voice of the broadcasting journalist must always be heard on the air.

Access to locations for filming and news-sources in general can also be problematic, although the experiences of

Journalists appeared to have more than enough to do, and travelled to the USSR in order to cover the 27th Congress of the CPSU, gave his view that access to Soviet citizens for interviewing purposes was relatively easy, provided that they themselves were willing to be questioned. John Tusa of the BBC, on the other hand, who also went to Moscow for the 27th Congress, stated that "you need permission for everything you do".

The extent to which journalists are constrained from gathering news on the subject of their choice appears to depend on the nature of the request, and on the timing. Most of the journalists interviewed agreed that during the 27th Congress facilities for news-gathering were relatively good by comparison with normal Soviet practice. Here again however, the press correspondent enjoys an advantage. He or she does not require film with which to illustrate stories, in contrast to the needs of the broadcasters. Permission to film is more difficult to obtain than permission to do 'vox pop' or 'stick' interviews on the streets of Moscow, and is rarely given inside public buildings and a range of other locations which might be of interest to television news.

We have already referred to 'cultural isolation' as a constraint on gathering Soviet news, and its contribution to the journalistic tendency to overemphasis the theme of dissent. Another possible consequence of cultural isolation is a routine reliance on Western diplomatic sources, who thus become privileged definers of newsworthy Soviet-related events. Martin Walker of The Guardian observes that

many of my Western colleagues here are still certainly close to their own Embassies as news-sources, particularly as commentary sources, and the embassies - certainly the British Embassy these days - tend to follow slavishly the American line, the Reagan-Thatcher line. The dominant mood amongst the British and the Americans is - this is the enemy, you can't trust these guys an inch, whatever they're up to it's a trap.

While emphasising that on technical issues Embassy sources were frequently valuable and reliable sources of information, Walker believes that their political commentaries are predictable and biased.

Before I telephone the British Embassy for a comment, I know what that commentary is going to be. I can almost write it.

The extent to which Western journalists rely on Western diplomatic sources for commentary and background to stories is clearly a factor in shaping coverage. This reliance may be a matter of the journalists' choice, in which case it reflects a form of 'bias' towards some sources rather than others. However, it may also be a consequence of constraints placed in the path of the journalist by the Soviet authorities. This brings us to another important factor in the shaping of the content of news about the Soviet Union: Soviet information policy and news management.

At the April Plenum of 1985, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union first formulated the new information policy summarised by the slogan of broad publicity (shirokaya glasnost). Recognising that the traditional Soviet reluctance to deal with the Western media was counter-productive to the objective of having Soviet views reported fairly in the West, one of the policy's aims was to improve the flow of

The new approach was partly the result of the contribution of the Soviet 'Americanists', such as Georgi Arbatov, who have studied Western media and understand how it works. Alexei Pankin, a Western media specialist at the USA-Canada Institute, of which Arbatov is the director, says, "we have managed to persuade the Foreign Ministry and the other bodies that it is important to work with the Western media, to inform them, to fill the information-void. We said, if we don't do it, somebody else will". Pankin continues:

In the post-Revolutionary period, the Cold War and after, there was very great suspicion of the Western media. A great number of Soviets wrote them off, not without reason. But people without information try to guess things. Now these people realise the importance of giving information, and they discuss things in public that were never discussed before.

Izvestia correspondent Stanislav Kondrashov argues:

It's a permanent change. It's the result of a conscious decision to give more information. Both to our own people and to the West. This is also the principle of publicity. The slogan is being put into practice. Of course, much must be changed so that there really is this broad publicity, because unfortunately the bureaucratic habit of closing off information has formed. Nevertheless things are changing, if not so quickly as one would like.

In line with the new policy the Soviet authorities instituted a system of on-the-record news conferences for foreign journalists in Moscow. By contrast, briefings and news conferences at the British and American embassies in Moscow tend to be off-the-record, and thus non-attributable. Peter Ruff of the BBC has noticed a significant change in Soviet public relations.

Andropov decided that the Soviet Union could improve its image by using publicity. Gorbachov is really only taking that one stage further. Gorbachov saw that the only way to tackle the Western propaganda machine, as he would put it, was to tackle it head on. You decide what your policy is, you announce it officially, you brief on it officially. And you could argue that his policy has worked. People in the West are now more aware of what Soviet policy is, particularly on arms control, than they have ever been before, and that's partly because the Soviet Union decided that it was not getting it's message across, quite apart from the rights and wrongs of the policy. It is still solid Communist policy, but they're presenting it differently.

They've accepted that the Western media have to be drip-fed a certain amount of information.

John Tusa argues that "they tried out [the new information policy] at Helsinki [the European Conference on Human Rights], the Geneva summit, and discovered that they could compete with the Americans. Gorbachev is a man they can project, and they understand that they will have a fuller presentation of their case if they cooperate with the Western media". Around the 27th Congress, he claimed, "the Soviets were very helpful. There was a definite change of policy". Nik Gowing, however, argued that there had been "no significant change in the approach of the Soviet public relations machine to Western correspondents, and accounted for the increased quantity of Soviet news in late 85 and early 86 by recourse to normal journalistic newsvalues: "there is so much going on in the Soviet Union at the moment, and thus so much more to report".

As a consequence of these changes the Soviet viewpoint has apparently become more attractive as a news source to Western journalists, to the extent that the US Embassy in Moscow has become seriously concerned. According to Ruff:

the new policy has infuriated the Americans because Soviet spokesmen are constantly on the record. They can be quoted. The Americans meanwhile, and to some extent the British, are clinging on to the old idea of background briefings. When you put sets of information up against each other, a set of information that has a name to it is always better than this weird formula of 'I understand' or 'sources tell me', or 'a senior diplomat said'. So the Americans have taken to attacking Western correspondents, including their own, for reporting the Soviet spokesmen, and that is a serious problem behind the scenes.

One illustration of the impact of the new policy can be seen in the response of Western journalists to Mikhail Gorbachev. In sharp contrast to some of the negative images of Soviet leaders discussed earlier, the main theme of Mikhail Gorbachev's introduction to the British television viewer was his reforming zeal, his youth and his "lively flexible manner...firm but not at all unreasonable"(1 2100 11/3/85).

Gorbachev was presented on television as a refreshing change from the septagenarians who preceded him, although he was recognised to be a strict Marxist-Leninist in ideological terms, like all Soviet leaders before him.

Gorbachov is still a strict orthodox marxist. In so sense has he shown himself to be a liberal. The Soviet Union chooses strong leaders to protect Soviet interests and Soviet idoleogy, and that's the man in the Kremlin tonight. (4 1900 13/3/85)

Why then, was he not portrayed as 'the new master', the 'hardman', the 'dictator', the 'emperor' or any of the other epithets applied to his predecessors in television news? One reason is that Gorbachev looked better than his predecessors, but more importantly he understood the Western media in a way that they did not. Martin Walker puts it this way:

Senior Soviet officials are very frank about the sense of shame they felt at the succession of elderly invalids in the Kremlin. They couldn't read a speech without losing their way, couldn't stand up without being helped, and they think that now they've got a reasonably attractive, energetic, younger leader, and that changes are coming. They're learning the ropes of the modern media age, and to understand that you just have to see how Gorbachev appears on TV. There's never been a Soviet leader quite like him in his sense of relaxation and readiness.

Patrick Cockburn believes that "what's made 70% of the difference, the Soviet leader appears to be a human guy, prepared to discuss problems and handle questions, not somebody who looks and behaves like a member of the mafia". Gorbachev's coverage on British television, as elsewhere, shows that Soviet news management has an effect on television's 'image of the enemy'. Ironically, one journalist's praise for Gorbachev revealed something of the nature of the assumptions, stereotypes and biases which underly much Soviet news coverage. Gorbachev was different, said this journalist, from "the old, grey, predictable style of Kremlin leadership"(1 2100 11/3/85).

Just before Christmas when he paid a visit to Britain he established himself as a man who was human, when we rather expected Soviet leaders to be tough and brutal, and capable of cracking jokes when we expected them to be humourless...He helped to change our prejudices.

3. Access to Soviet News.

A large part of television news' information about the Soviet Union is presented in the form of reported statements by extra-media sources called upon to comment on the issues.

The importance of such sources lies in their power, by virtue of their access to the media, to become primary definers of events and issues. Their views become privileged views. As Hall et al discuss in their Policing the Crisis (1978), the routine structures of news media tend to favour the powerful in society, representatives of the establishment who are assumed to be credible and authoritative sources of information.

The primary definers of Soviet news tend to be drawn from the political establishment on the one hand, and the academic community on the other - the Sovietologists, or 'Kremlinologists', who specialise in reading the secretive, elaborate codes of Soviet political life. While these experts are often authoritative, it cannot be assumed that they always are. From his experience as a Moscow correspondent Patrick Cockburn argues that "Soviet high politics are difficult to report, and Kremlinology - who's doing what to whom in the Kremlin - is impossible".

There's a journalistic tradition in reporting the Soviet Union of not doing the things that are feasible - such as reporting how the society works and what are the various political balances - but instead concentrating on Kremlinology, which really isn't feasible if the information isn't there. You don't know enough about the personalities, and the strengths of the people in the Politburo, or in the apparatus, or in the Central Committee, and most of this Kremlinology is absurd because the sources of information are wholly inadequate.

in most places journalists wouldn't dare to produce long theories based on such inadequate information. When you look back at them, you see that most of it's a load of baloney. If you take any straw in the wind, then you can produce a sort of fantasy construction of life here, but it doesn't have much meaning.

The 'absurdity' of much Kremlinology in Western journalism is sometimes evident in British television news, as the following example, taken from our 'routine' news sample, illustrates.

On May 24th, 1983 Vladimir Danchev, a Radio Moscow newscaster, in the course of a routine English-language broadcast, "branded Soviet troops [in Afghanistan] as aggressors and praised the Afghan guerrilla forces for their activity against Soviet forces"(4 1900 24/5/83). According to the Channel 4 correspondent, "the mystifying broadcasts are short. They started when newsreader Vladimir Danchev made a single unprecedented announcement. Tribal leaders, he said, were appealing for increased anti-Soviet activity". Excerpts from Mr Danchev's broadcasts were played on the news, such as the following:

Reports from Kabul say that tribes living in the eastern provinces Nangahar and Baktia have joined the struggle against the Soviet invaders. A decision to give an armed rebuff to the bandits was given at the tribes' meeting.

The correspondent noted that it was "extraordinary" for

the Kremlin's personal mouthpiece to the world to admit publicly that the Russians had invaded Afghanistan...And it wasn't just a slip of the tongue... it could surely not have been a mistake or personal deviation.

The report ended by posing the following choice:

was it a mistake, was it Mr Danchev daydreaming as he

lead, or was this the first known case of Soviet propaganda broadcasts?

BBC1 reported that "the propaganda voice of the Kremlin has gone haywire"(1 2100 24/5/83). The correspondent asked if it was "a signal from the KGB that a change in policy on Afghanistan was coming?. Hardly", opined the correspondent. "The Kremlin would never approve words so shocking to Soviet ears".

All the more surprising then, that ITN should have allowed Soviet 'expert' Leo Babedz to make sense of the event in terms of a Kremlin power struggle. News at Ten that evening began:

A series of Moscow Radio broadcasts praising the Afghan rebels who are fighting Russian troops are thought tonight to indicate a power struggle in the Kremlin(3 2200 24/5/83).

The evidence for this interpretation came from "experts on Soviet affairs" who "have ruled out an unofficial protest. Instead they put it down to disagreement between Soviet leader Mr Andropov and Mr Chernenko, the man he beat for Brezhnev's job". It was not made clear how Danchev's statements could have been of help to a Soviet leader involved in a "power struggle", and there was no evidence presented for a connection between Danchev and "the Kremlin". The 'power struggle' theory became nevertheless, the favoured explanation.

Correspondent: Are you saying that this is some kind of back-stabbing operation?

Leo Babedz (Soviet expert): It looks like it, but of course we don't know who is the person who is going to be blamed for it, and whether it has a really high

connection.

Correspondent: Presumably it is quite high, otherwise it wouldn't be allowed to happen?

Leo Babedz: Otherwise it wouldn't be allowed to go out, of course.

The journalist has taken on the expert's definition of the problem without question.

The story was never followed up on television news. Three years later the correspondent who covered the story for ITN told the author that Danchev had reportedly been re-employed by Radio Moscow after a brief spell of recuperation in a psychiatric ward. While this explanation was recognised as a possibility in News at Ten's coverage at the time, it was written off in favour of the elaborate conspiracy theory outlined by Babedz which became, for all its lurid Archeresque quality, the dominant explanation of the event.

Coverage of the deaths of the Soviet leaders provides an opportunity to examine the structure of access to Soviet news in some detail. Table 3.3 shows who appeared as 'definers' during this coverage. The great majority were members of the political establishment, and in particular the political establishment of the United States. Of the 20 individuals who appeared on the sampled main evening news bulletins (and several of these appeared on more than one occasion within a single bulletin) nine were past or present members of the American government, and eight of the British political establishment (see table 3.3a).

There were a further three appearances: one by an American academic on the issue of Star Wars; one by the American

industrialist Armand Hammer who spoke about meeting Brezhnev; and one by a Soviet politician.

This structure of access was also apparent on the minority audience programmes (see table 3.3b) although the views of political leaders were supplemented to a greater degree by academics and other specialist commentators.

The statements of Western political leaders contained condolences, calls for better behaviour from the Soviet leadership in future, and statements of sincere Western interest in improved relations - reflecting as one would expect, the currently dominant view on the problem as being one induced by the USSR. However, the tone of statements changed with the fluctuating state of East-West relations. Mrs Thatcher for example, who did not attend the Brezhnev funeral, was reported on that occasion as "being likely to call for genuine evidence that the Russians are serious about multilateral disarmament"(1 2100 11/11/82). In Moscow for the Andropov funeral her comments were noticeably less combative, while comments made after her meeting with Gorbachev at the Chernenko funeral were made in a tone which could almost have been described as affectionate.

Journalist: Do you still like Gorbachev?

Thatcher: Of course. I respect him. He's very able, and on that basis, yes, we can do business.(1 2100 13/3/85)

Former members of the political establishment were asked to give their views on the personalities of the dead leader, on the succession, and also to give their prognoses for future East-West relations. Harold Wilson spoke of how

Brezhnev had been a "moderate man", while David Owen said that "no-one should think he was a moderate man". Former President Richard Nixon was reported on two main evening bulletins, without any apparent sense of irony.

As a Russian he said Mr Brezhnev was warm, effusive, ebullient. As a communist, he was a ruthless schemer and a relentless aggressor.(1 2100 11/11/82)

Table 3.3a Appearances on news coverage of the deaths of Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko.

Main news.

Name	Status	Number of appearances
Ronald Reagan	President, USA	6
Margaret Thatcher	Prime Minister, UK	5
George Bush	Vice President, USA	3
George Schultz	US Secretary of State	2
Geoffrey Howe	UK Foreign Secretary	2
Edward Djeripan	US State Dep Spokesman	1
Richard Burt	US Ass Sec of State	1
Jimmy Carter	Ex President, USA	2
Henry Kissinger	Ex Sec of State, USA	3
Zbigniew Brzezinski	Ex National Security Adviser	1
James Callaghan	Ex Prime Minister, UK	2
Harold Wilson	Ex Prime Minister, UK	1
Neil Kinnock	Opposition leader	3
David Owen	Ex Foreign Secretary, UK	4
David Steel	Leader, Liberal Party	1
Denis Healey	Ex Foreign Secretary, UK	1
Vladimir Scherbitsky	Politburo Member, CPSU	1
Professor Henry Kendall	Mass. Institute of Technology	1
Armand Hammer	Head, Occidental Petroleum	1

3.3b. Minority audience programmes.

Name	Status	Number of Appearances
Ronald Reagan	US President	3
Henry Kissinger	Ex Sec of State, USA	4
Arkady Shevchenko	Soviet Defector	1
Karen Dawisha	Sovietologist	1
James Callaghan	Ex PM, UK	2
Vladimir Dunaev	Soviet commentator	1
Zhores Medvedev	Emigre	2
Alex Pravda	Sovietologist	1
Neil Kinnock	Labour leader	2
Francis Pym	Foreign Sec	1
Denis Healey	Ex Defence Sec	1
David Steel	Liberal leader	2
David Owen	Ex Foreign Sec	2
Z. Brzezinski	Ex Nat Sec adviser	3
Paul Warnke	SALT II negotiator	1
George Schultz	US Sec of State	2
John Berryman	Academic	1
Peter Frank	Soviet expert	3
Sam Donaldson	Washington correspondent, ABC news	1
Soviet speaker	CPSU CC member	1
Clayborne Pell	US Senator	1
Michael Kaser	Sovietologist	1
Geoffrey Stern	Sovietologist	1
Archie Brown	Sovietologist	2
Dimitri Simes	Soviet emigre	1
Sir Curtis Keeble	Ex UK Ambassador	1
George Walden	MP	1
Nathaniel Davis	EX US Diplomat	1
Vladimir Posner	Soviet commentator	1

Coverage of Brezhnev's death included an interview with Armand Hammer, the American industrialist. His inclusion as an expert was explained in the following way.

Newscafter: Dr Hammer has been going to Russia since 1921 when he persuaded Lenin to trade Russian furs for American grain. He was one of the very few outsiders to get a glimpse of President Brezhnev's private life, and he for one liked what he saw.

Hammer: He was a warm-hearted man. He was very human. I dined with him, I spent the weekend with him at Yalta, I came away with the impression that he was a great force for peace and that he would give his life for peace, as he told me with tears in his eyes.(3 2200 11/11/82)

Reported statements on the death of Chernenko revealed some consensus that Gorbachev was a significant departure from 'the old style' of Kremlin leader. Neil Kinnock who had met Gorbachev stated that he was "sharp, bright, and he enjoys an argument". David Owen spoke of a "pretty sharp intellect" and, as we have seen, even Mrs Thatcher had praise for him.

Former leaders also 'advised' current ones on how to proceed with the new Soviet administration. Following Brezhnev's death former US President Jimmy Carter warned the West that the Soviets would engage in a period of "propaganda" struggle to convince the world that it was they and not the United States who were interested in nuclear disarmament.

Some statements were clearly within the hawkish, conservative framework for understanding East-West relations, such as that made by Carter's former National Security

Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who advised President Reagan not to go to the funeral of Yuri Andropov because "Andropov doesn't deserve it. He wasn't a major figure, he was a nominal figure. He was also involved in some rather unpleasant business and therefore the President should not go"(1 2100 10/2/84).

Other statements reflected what we identified in Chapter 2 as the 'pragmatic' framework for understanding East-West relations. British Prime Minister James Callaghan advised the present NATO leaders to tread softly with the Soviet government in its period of transition and avoid the emergence of a "hardliner".

One reported statement from this group of past and present leaders represented the view that, contrary to the claims of Western governments, the West was at least partly responsible for the crisis. This point was made by Denis Healey, former British Defence Secretary, in relation to Yuri Andropov.

It's fair to say that Andropov tried very hard to improve relations both with China and with the West. He failed because neither took the hand offered out.(3 2200 10/2/84)

On the minority-audience Newsnight programme one of the academic commentators, Geoffrey Stern of the London School of Economics, echoed Denis Healey's interpretation of the Andropov period by suggesting that it had been the West and not the Soviet Union which had prevented the improvement of East-West relations. According to Stern:

There were a whole proliferation of proposals on arms control. He warmed to the Chinese. There might have been

Some movement on his part. It was only in the end, when he came up against an intransigent world that he became intransigent too. There was no movement in the West, and therefore no movement in the East either. (2 Newsnight 14/2/84).

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the structure of access to Soviet news is the relative exclusion of soviet sources. During the sample period main evening bulletins completely excluded Soviet opinion from news about Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, with one exception which counts for the purposes of this analysis only in so far as a Soviet voice was heard to speak. Politburo member Vladimir Scherbitsky, head of a Soviet delegation visiting the United States when Konstantin Chernenko's death was announced, appeared in one bulletin in the following context.

Correspondent: Not many Russians make it to the Oval Office to talk to President Reagan but when Politburo member Vladimir Scherbitsky did last week his central message was reserved for Star Wars, as he told us afterwards.

Scherbitsky: We tried to prove that this is not worthwhile. (3 2200 11/3/85)

This was the only statement by a Soviet source to be broadcast on main evening news at any time during coverage of the deaths of the Soviet leaders. On the minority audience programmes two interviews with Soviet commentators were broadcast: one in ITN's Channel 4 studio with Vladimir Dunaev on the death of Brezhnev, and one with Vladimir Posner after the funeral of Chernenko, via satellite from Moscow.

The reasons for the relative lack of Soviet opinion in Soviet news can be related to two factors. One is the assumption that the Soviets are not legitimate sources of

information. This was, apparently, a problem for American broadcasters during the Chernobyl crisis, when the appearance of Soviet commentators on television news coverage prompted the claim from certain political groups that it was not appropriate for these views to be allowed to take part in US political debate[11].

Another explanation focusses on the reluctance of the Soviet authorities to provide commentators as and when required by the broadcasters: in short, failures in Soviet news management. Questioned as to the reason for the relative lack of Soviet commentators at periods when their point of view might be of some importance to a fuller understanding of events, John Tusa of BBC news told the author that interviews with them take too long to "set up" on British television. They could, he said, take up to two days to arrange.

In so far as the non-availability of Soviet sources has affected television news coverage of the Soviet view it is clearly a factor over which the Soviets themselves have control. As we saw in the previous section the Soviets are becoming increasingly conscious of the negative effects of their traditional way of dealing with the Western media, and have begun to remedy the problem. From the period of the 1985 Geneva summit viewers report that there are more Soviet commentators appearing on British television news, an observation perhaps related to the fact that more Soviet commentators are being made available in line with the new information policy which has accompanied the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachov to the leadership of the Party. Soviet sources may be gaining increasing access to Western media,

including British television news, because of the new approach to public relations and news management. If this is so however, it remains largely confined to minority-audience programming. Furthermore, journalists retain the power to intervene, to mediate in the presentation of the Soviet view, as Newsnight's interview with Vladimir Posner illustrates. Posner speaks fluent English with a disconcertingly accurate North American accent. He has appeared several times on Newsnight, and on this occasion was asked to comment on Gorbachov's speech at the funeral. In the structuring of the question it can be seen that the definition of the issue provided by Western leaders is already a 'given' for the interviewer.

At this time NATO leaders were presenting the deterioration of East-West relations to a concerned Western public as a Soviet problem, and suggesting that the Soviet Union was to blame for the new cold war. As we have seen an alternative interpretation of the problem was available, articulated on the news by Denis Healey and Geoffrey Stern. They argued that Andropov had been responsible for "a proliferation" of arms control proposals, that he had "held out the hand of friendship", but that the West had refused to accept it.

This alternative to the dominant interpretation of the problem was foreclosed in the structure of the Posner interview, which began with the interviewer inquiring of Posner if "a more conciliatory approach" could be expected from the new leader. The journalist takes for granted what

and attempts to have Posner answer from within this framework.

Journalist: I asked [Posner] if Mr Gorbachev's emphasis today on goodneighbourly relations [in his funeral oration to Konstantin Chernenko] meant that he would adopt a more conciliatory approach to the West than his predecessors have been doing?

The question assumes that a lack of conciliation on the Soviet side has been a feature of recent East-West relations, closing off alternative definitions of the issue. Posner, however, refuses to be restricted to this framework.

Posner: You know, I think that if you look back on the people you call his predecessors, to begin with Mr Brezhnev, during his period we had detente in the early 70s, followed by Mr Andropov who was clearly interested in preserving detente and having good relations with the West, and of course Mr Chernenko who followed the same line. I don't think that what Mr Gorbachev said was anything sensational or surprising. This country, indeed, always wanted and very much desires good, normal, business-like relations with the West.(2 Newsnight 13/3/85)

The experience of one group of Soviet experts recently invited to contribute to a British current affairs programme also shows that access is not the only factor in determining the presentation of the Soviet view.

On the eve of the 1985 Geneva summit BBCs Panorama programme invited some Soviet experts to discuss the issues. According to two of those experts, the programme-makers applied a questionable editing approach to the material. As Alexei Pankin, one of those interviewed for the programme, put it to the author in Moscow:

We think they did a very good job. It's just their

mindset. Through their editing of our contributions, they made us conform to their mindset. Our own impression is that the message we tried to give in numerous interviews was somewhat different from the message we gave on the air.

First of all we had each to give a short presentation, speaking for about ten minutes on the subject of the United States, speaking about our views on its values, its achievements, how we feel, and I would say we were very positive. But certainly, each of us also said something to balance that, some negative comments. They cut the positive comments in general, and put as background over our negative comments Soviet military parades in Red Square, Soviet troops entering Afghanistan, so that it formed a rather sinister impression - over pictures of Soviet troops entering Afghanistan we were heard speaking of America as a country of joblessness, of poverty, lack of spiritual values, and so on.

The routine structure of access to news about the Soviet Union favours establishment opinion and tends to exclude Soviet sources. However, minority-audience programmes are relatively open to competing viewpoints when compared with the main evening bulletins, in the sense suggested by Schlesinger et al when they note that "some types of programming are relatively closed. They operate mainly or wholly within the terms of reference set by the official perspective. But other forms are relatively open in the sense that they provide spaces in which the core assumptions of the official perspective can be interrogated and contested, and in which other perspectives can be presented and examined"(1983, p.32). These authors refer to the entire range of televisual forms, including fictional ones, but a similar distinction can be made within news programming. We will have occasion to note this feature of coverage elsewhere in the study, and it can be illustrated here with two examples.

Channel 4's coverage of the death of Chernenko

counterposed the views of two experts to construct a debate about the nature of the USSR. The journalist 'set up' the debate by acknowledging that

In the West there's often open disagreement about how the nature of the Soviet system should be perceived.

Firstly, the viewer heard the opinions of Zbigniew Brzezinski, a conservative and a firm believer in the basic illegitimacy and inevitable downfall of the Soviet 'empire'.

Zbigniew Brzezinski: The Soviet system is in crisis... the Soviet empire is nearing the end of its days, and I think it behoves us to find ways of making that end gradual and peaceful rather than explosive.

Brzezinski's views were 'balanced' with those of the British academic Peter Frank.

Peter Frank: The Soviet Union is not in a state of crisis... it has very serious problems. I think, however, the same could be said of any major power in the world.(4 1900 11/3/85)

Another example of a similiary-structured item, in which negative perceptions of the Soviet Union were constructed as matters for debate rather than of fact, fell outside the main sample period.

On October 18th 1983, as the Geneva INF talks between the superpowers were entering their final and ultimately unproductive phase BBC's Newsnight broadcast a report on the debate about the Soviet Threat, and how this related to the impending Cruise and Pershing deployments. The item concerned the publication of two new books about the Soviet Union which in different ways criticised perceptions of the Soviet

Threat. World Power, by Jonathan Steele, and The Threat, by Andrew Cockburn. Steele's book considered the extent of the Threat in terms of the nature of the constraints on and the history of Soviet foreign policy. Cockburn's work examined the technical and organisational limitations of the Soviet military. One author argued that Soviet intentions were not as aggressive as sometimes claimed; the other argued that the Soviet ability to carry aggressive intentions into practice was overstated. These works became the basis for an item in which "through the eyes of these authors and with the help of a Soviet general and a leading British expert on Russia, we explore the case for regarding the Russians as perhaps less of a threat than they're sometimes made out to be".(2 Newsnight 18/10/83).

The 'leading British expert' was Professor John Erickson of Edinburgh University, and the Soviet general was Lt-General Mikhail Milstein, visiting Britain with the Soviet delegation to the Edinburgh Conversations of 1983.

The presenter began by outlining two competing views of the Soviet Union. First, "the current perception of the Soviet Union as depicted for us by those at present in charge in Washington and London".

a very massive and threatening military power, stretching from Central Europe to the extremes of Asia, poised to exploit any opportunities for expansion.

This view was contrasted with another, "looking from the inside outwards", and of which "we hear much less these days":

the view that sees the men in the Kremlin swamped by Russia's own internal problems and encircled by a whole range of external threats to their security. The Chinese in the east, the unsettled Muslims to the south, and the Afghans still unbeaten. Beyond that the Americans deploying massively in the Indian Ocean. To the west, beyond their own recalcitrant allies in eastern Europe, a whole ring of the West's nuclear and conventional systems pointing at them from Turkey around to northern Norway.

The item proceeded with a critical examination of the views of "those at present in charge". This was done firstly in relation to the specific theme of the INF debate. On the one hand, explained the journalist, "the first pictures of Cruise and Pershing missiles exercising, not in America as up to now but in Western Europe will be reckoned a victory of sorts by many Western diplomats: a victory for NATO solidarity; a victory over the protesters; a victory over Soviet propaganda". On the other, suggested John Erickson to the journalist, "this deployment marks a very serious change in the general East-West situation". Jonathan Steele gave an account of the Soviet response to the deployments: "I think they will feel that it shows the West is on the warpath against them rhetorically, diplomatically, economically and every other way... it will generally convince them that the West still cannot seem to understand their aims and intentions".

Journalist: And what about the political perception that the Soviets have and will have after this break of the West, when they hear the kind of thing that President Reagan and Mrs Thatcher say about their intentions?

Erickson: I think they will argue that all the talk about arms control and arms negotiation is hypocritical nonsense, or as Mr Andropov said, 'it's prattle'. In other words we intend to go ahead unilaterally with a very considerable rearmament programme come what may. We will wriggle out of, ignore, deride or denounce what the Russians regard as serious arms control proposals. What

are they to make of this? Does it mean that negotiation is ruled out completely and that they must deal with ideologically implacable opponents?

These opinions were utilised in the construction of "a very different view" of Soviet military power (different from the dominant view). Soviet military power was contextualised in terms of Soviet history (the Second World War and the German invasion) and Soviet defence needs in the contemporary world.

Journalist: The first principle of Soviet security and strategy is that no one ever again shall be allowed to inflict on Russia the disaster that Hitler's armies inflicted in the last war. To those who take a sympathetic view of Soviet intentions, if it seems that they're rearming excessively and overinsuring against any conceivable attack this is partly an overreaction to their failure to stop the Germans sooner. The Kremlin is not going to be surprised again.

Jonathan Steele: They're basically concerned with national security, meaning the defence of their own territory... if you look at history since Stalin died the Russians have hardly expanded anywhere, not by contrast with some of the things the West has done in the Third World. They actually are quite cautious, they're quite restrained and they do draw a very clear distinction between the immediate geographical zone of their borders - Afghanistan is a border country - and the rest of the world which they see as much less interesting to them and of much less high priority in strategic terms.

Asked by the journalist if Western leaders "exaggerate Soviet military capability?" defence expert Andrew Cockburn, giving examples from the Soviet tank forces and navy, replied that "our general image of Soviet military power doesn't really correspond to the reality when you look at it close up".

The item then moved on to an interview with the Conservative MP George Walden, who criticised the Thatcher

Government's attitude to the USSR. One of the things that I think is rather lamentable is that it's about eight years since a serving British Prime Minister has been to Moscow". The item ended by giving the Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe an opportunity to respond to the points which had gone before.

By accessing British and Soviet sources with views different to those of current political leaders, this item created a space in which the dominant Soviet threat framework for making sense of defence and disarmament issues could be contested.

It, and the other counter-examples referred to in this chapter, provide a clear demonstration that television news can be structured so as to be open to radically opposing viewpoints, even on the most basic Soviet threat assumptions. This does not necessitate the inclusion of Soviet sources, since there are many within the establishment who also challenge the perspective of current Western leaders. It merely requires a recognition that 'currently dominant views' are open to question.

1. Leonid Brezhnev died on November 10th, 1982. His death was reported on November 11th, his funeral on November 15th. Yuri Andropov died on February 10th, 1984, and his funeral took place on February 14th. Konstantin Chernenko died on March 11th, 1985, and his funeral took place on March 13th.

2. In the Soviet context such stories often produce a secondary narrative about Soviet society. In the following examples the Volga River incident became a story about how "the Russians" respond to disasters (we will note here that the tendency in the West to say 'Russians' when referring to the Soviets is also apparent in television news).

The fact that it was announced at all and so soon after the event suggests that it was a disaster of major proportions.(1 2100 6/6/83)

ITN also interpreted the seriousness of the incident in terms what was at that time, the Soviet policy of not reporting disasters. Soviet news agencies have traditionally been reluctant to report 'bad news' in the form of disasters and misfortune. Some quite major catastrophes, such as an incident on the Moscow Metro in 1985 which killed several hundred people, have never been reported in the USSR. Airline crashes have been announced only if foreign citizens are among the casualties. Recently however, following pressure from Soviet public opinion heightened by the Chernobyl disaster, this policy has shown signs of change.

3. The commentaries which accompany this visual material often make sense of it in terms of currently topical political issues. BBC's coverage of the 1982 May Day parade used the event to construct a story about Soviet support for Argentina in the Falklands conflict, then the dominant news story in Britain. BBC1's lunchtime bulletin reported that "some hints about what the Russians think of the Falklands conflict emerged at the May Day parade in Moscow this morning"(1250 1/5/82). Over Soviet-supplied film of the event, the Moscow correspondent gave the following commentary:

Whatever battles might or might not be going on in the Falklands, 'Peace to the World' was one of the 84 official slogans in today's Red Square parade. The Soviet Communist Party announces these slogans weeks in advance every year and every year they duly and ritualistically appear as thousands of Russians march past the tomb of Lenin. From the top of the mausoleum as usual the members of the ruling Politburo watched the proceedings. The emphasis was on the power of the workers, not, as in the November Red Square parade, on military might.

With the Falklands crisis now in mind one of today's slogans had more immediate topicality perhaps than the Party's propagandists realised when they drafted it: 'Warm greetings to the peoples of Latin America who are fighting against imperialism and reaction'. That's the

essential Kremlin view of the British role in the Falklands crisis. Mrs Thatcher is accused of hysteria and of trying to save face. Britain is accused of trying to shore up the decrepit foundations of colonialism. Britain's NATO allies are accused of supporting Britain in open economic and military blackmail. The Americans in particular are accused of furtively plotting to take control of the Falklands. But while Britain, America and NATO are painted as villains suggestions that the Soviet Union itself might be trying to take advantage of the Falklands conflict are dismissed as 'absolutely groundless rumours' and 'anti-Soviet tales from Washington'.

The theme of Soviet support for Argentina dominated BBC's coverage of the event throughout the day, although the offending slogan, by the correspondent's own admission, was only one of 84 slogans, all of which had been drafted weeks before the invasion of the Falklands.

ITN's coverage of the parade adopted an entirely different newsangle. Over the film the newscaster reported that "President Brezhnev looked well despite recent speculation about his health. He smiled and waved throughout the 90 minute parade". It was also noted that "for the third year running the celebrations were boycotted by most Western ambassadors as a protest against Russia's involvement in Afghanistan"(3 2200 1/5/82).

4. In the interview which followed Solzhenitsyn's remarks about 'evil communism', 'oppressed millions', etc., pass without qualification by the journalist.

Journalist: Well I met Solzhenitsyn in his hotel room this morning. I asked him first if he agrees with President Reagan that the Soviet Union is a centre of evil.

Solzhenitsyn: One shouldn't say simply the Soviet Union. First of all, in the Soviet Union there are millions of oppressed people. They dream only of getting rid of oppression. It's not the Soviet Union which is the centre of evil but the Politburo. There are as many centres of evil as there are centres of communism - Peking, Cuba, and with the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, there's no less a degree of evil than in the Politburo.

Journalist: Was it a mistake for the West to rely so exclusively on the nuclear umbrella for its defence against the Soviet Union?

Solzhenitsyn: To understand this one has to go back. In the early 20s all educated Russians fled to the West. They spoke of incredible events, but the West paid no attention. No support was given to the Russian people's resistance. Then 50 years ago Soviet ships arrived here loaded with logs. Prisoners wrote on them in blood about Solovky camps. But you paid no attention - you used the logs and listened to Bernard Shaw. 40 years ago a new wave of immigrants came to the West. They told exactly

the same story. No-one listened. Even worse, the west betrayed and deported them. they were sent back to the Soviet Union and were massacred. 30 years ago Kravchenko went to Paris and published his revealing book. The West preferred to listen to Bertrand Russell. Seven to nine years ago I tried to give the West political advice. Nobody cared. I believe this political role of mine is over. You said, OK - we'll cover ourselves with this nuclear umbrella. Alright, in the 40s and 50s the umbrella covered you. Now you see what it's turned into. There's no more umbrella. It's out of your hands and you face an even stronger threat.

Journalist: What is your judgment of the peace movement in the West, with its response to this overwhelming fear of nuclear war?

Solzhenitsyn: I don't believe that demonstrators against nuclear weapons demonstrate exclusively against them. I believe they demonstrate against any struggle. They don't want a struggle at all. No service in the army. They don't want any burden. They've decided it's better to be red than dead. You think Russell was right. There's no alternative - red or dead. Actually red also means dead. Exactly like lobsters thrown into boiling water.

Journalist: Do you think that because Mr. Andropov has taken over the Soviet Union that there is any particular likelihood of internal change there?

Solzhenitsyn: The West's naive. It doesn't want to achieve peace through its own efforts. The West wants a miracle to happen - for example in the Kremlin. The newspapers are full of such guesses. First this one, then that. Hawks or doves? As long as the communists run the Soviet Union it doesn't matter. Pay no attention to names. It will always be the same. Is change possible? Yes it is, but as a result of a change in the spirit of the nation, not because one communist succeeds another.

5. All statements in the text attributed to journalists were obtained in interviews conducted by the author in Moscow and London, unless otherwise stated.

6. Unless otherwise stated, all emphases are the author's own.

7. One important development in the crisis was not covered on television news. The Guardian on May 30th reported that:

the danger of war between Syria and Israel receded yesterday after what many sources believed was Soviet intervention to stop the sabre-rattling by Damascus... because the Soviet Union was afraid that the confrontation with Israel was spiralling out of control.

The end of a crisis, with the possibility of a Soviet contribution to peace, was not newsworthy. The beginning of

one, with "Russia" cast as arms supplier and troublemaker, was.

8. Coverage of the White Paper shows how, within certain limits, usually those defined as legitimate by the military-political establishment, existing defence policy can be challenged. Indeed, when a branch of the services feels itself to be under threat from the Government it positively encourages media debate. If however, arguments about cuts in the Navy or the design faults of new aircraft are present in news, challenges to the underlying concept of the Soviet threat are beyond discussion in the great proportion of television coverage - the Soviet threat exists in the realm of 'consensus'.

9. For a detailed analysis of television news coverage of the Falklands conflict, see War and Peace News by the Glasgow Media Group (1985).

10. An interesting footnote to this concerns the Soviet allegation that Tim Sebastian, Brian Hanrahan's predecessor as BBC correspondent in Moscow, worked for the CIA. the allegation came in a news conference given by Oleg Tumanov in Moscow.

Tumanov, until his 'redefection' to the USSR, had been Editor of the Russian service of Freedom/Radio Free Europe, a station with major CIA connections. In the course of the news conference Tumanov claimed that Western journalists based in Moscow were working for the CIA. There was laughter in the hall, according to a report in the Soviet weekly New Times (no.19, 1986). Tumanov then asked the assembled foreign journalists:

Do you want me to name one of your Moscow colleagues with whom I was working at the radio station? Do you want me to?

They did, and he named one:

Tim Sebastian, the BBC correspondent. He visited our headquarters in Munich and gave us information. He received unreliable information from me personally and I, like all the operatives at Freedom/Radio Free Europe, was connected with the CIA.

Sebastian was expelled from the USSR in September 1985, along with other British journalists and diplomats.

11. ABC's Nightline in the United States, writes Christopher Hitchens in the Spectator of May 10th, 1986, "is particularly good at getting Russians on the air, a facility which has in the past enraged the White House. Vladimir Posner and Georgi Arbatov, says Pat Buchanan, are not fit participants in the American national debate".

Appendix 3.1. Main news coverage of the death and funeral of Leonid Brezhnev on BBC1 and ITV.

The following texts present full versions of main news items covering the death and funeral of Leonid Brezhnev. In form and structure they are representative of coverage of the deaths of all three Soviet leaders. Coverage comprised of a) accounts of the event itself, b) accounts of the dead leader's career and significance as a world leader, c) accounts of international reaction, and d) speculation on the process of succession to the Soviet leadership. Around these themes journalists 'spoke' to the viewer about Soviet society and life, and accessed a range of extra-media sources.

Items on November 11th, 1982, when Brezhnev's death was announced, began with introductory sections which show this structure in outline.

BBC1 2100 11/11/82

a) Introductions.



Newscaster: President Brezhnev, ruler of Russia for nearly two decades, is dead.

For the Soviet people tonight, five days of mourning begin.

For the leaders who have grown old in his shadow, the chance of ultimate power.

For President Reagan the hope of a new start for East-West relations.



Good evening. Tonight we'll be reporting from Moscow, London and Washington on the death of a man who's dominated the communist world for so long. We examine his life and his legacy and ask, who will take over? Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, arguably the most powerful man in the world is dead. He'd ruled Russia for 18 years. For most of that time he was undisputed leader of 260 million people in the Soviet Union and controlled the destiny of 120 million others in Russia's eastern empire. He held all the reins of power.

He was party leader, head of state, marshal of the Soviet Army. Despite declining health, his grip on power never weakened. He outlasted five American presidents.



He died at the age of 75 yesterday morning. He apparently had a heart attack as he got out of bed at his flat in central Moscow. The news of his death was delayed for more than 24 hours, then the official announcement said 'he would live for ever in the hearts of progressive mankind'. The state funeral will be on Monday.

President Brezhnev made his last appearance on Sunday at the traditional Red Square parade to mark the anniversary of the 1917 revolution. He had not looked well for several years but there was no indication his reign had less than three days left to run.



There is no single obvious successor. The posts held by Brezhnev are likely to be divided amongst the leading contenders. Meantime President Brezhnev's place in history is assured. The man who advocated disarmament yet presided over the biggest military build-up the world has ever seen; the man who embraced detente, but made sure democratic stirrings in his own empire were crushed; our first report tonight from John Osman in Moscow.

Correspondent: Respectfully wearing a dark suit, a television newsreader announced to the Soviet Union that President Brezhnev had died, a day after the event.



Soviet television announcer: The Communist Party Central Committee, the Supreme Soviet Presidium and the Council of Ministers, deeply regret to announce the sudden death at 8.30am on the 10th of November, of Central Committee member secretary and President of the Soviet Presidium, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. The name of Brezhnev, true continuer of Lenin's great cause and ardent champion of peace and communism will live forever in the hearts of the Soviet people and all progressive mankind.



Crr: The fact of the death seemed to take time to sink in. In Red Square people at first doubted that the man who had led this country for 20 years had gone. There was muted reaction and Western correspondents asking Russians questions about it were themselves greeted with questions.

At factories and workplaces the communist party told the people what had happened, and slowly the implications were absorbed. A member of the BBC's Russian staff here was telephoned by her mother who had trudged miles through muddy country lanes to put in a call and ask: is it true?

Well it is, now there are plans on the grand scale for a state funeral. Mr Brezhnev will be buried in the shadow of the Kremlin walls on Monday and his remains will lie in state from tomorrow. Guns will be fired at the moment of the burial in all the capitals of the 15 separate republics which form the Soviet Union. All work will stop for 5 minutes, and for 3 minutes factories, railway trains, ships and river vessels will sound sirens and hooters in a massive Soviet wail of mourning. Schools will be closed. Meanwhile the last uncompromising words of the dead leader delivered just last Sunday at a Kremlin reception have pointedly been repeated in a statement from the new leadership, including Brezhnev's warning that this country was prepared to deliver a crushing retaliatory strike against any aggressor. It's part of his legacy. In the same statement the Kremlin pledged itself to continue Soviet policies at home and abroad. This will depend on events and personalities.



Nc: To the Soviet people Brezhnev was a remote figure, known mainly through official photographs. Little was known or told about his private life. Our Europe correspondent Tim Sebastian looks back at what is known about him.

b) The career



Crr: Mr Brezhnev gave the Soviet Union nearly 20 years of stable leadership and international clout. He wasn't an innovator, his theme was control. His policies predictable, orthodox and uncompromising. Himself, remote and uncolourful. Brezhnev came from the Ukraine, a product of the Soviet revolutions, both industrial and political. He served in the Red Army as



an ideologist, played the system and rose steadily through the civilian hierarchy. He himself ousted Nikita Krushchev in a Kremlin coup in 1964. Noone, including the victim, knew anything of the power struggle until it was over. Brezhnev had two vocabularies, the one championed the cause of detente, the other attacked what he called Western subversion. His policy of selective intervention became known as the Brezhnev doctrine.



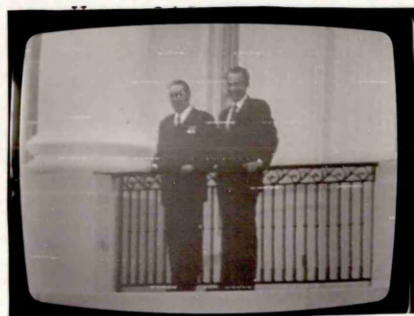
Nothing showed this more clearly than the killing of the Prague Spring in 1968. Alexander Dubcek had tried to liberalise Czechoslovakia, he called it socialism with a human face.

But the face didn't please anyone else in the bloc. Brezhnev himself warned that socialism was in danger and had to be defended.

The showdown was in August that year when Brezhnev came to order the Czech leaders to turn back. The friendship was for the cameras. Behind it lay a different reality.

A few days later Russian tanks ploughed across the frontier, a reluctant Czechoslovakia was towed at gunpoint back into the Brezhnev fold. He said to have told Mr Dubcek, the invasion would have gone ahead, even at the risk of war in Europe.

Mr Brezhnev was later to concentrate his energies on the West. In 1973 he visited West Germany, marking a dramatic thaw in East-West relations.



This success took him on to America. Relations had improved with the White House after the Americans withdrew from Vietnam. Mr Nixon's problems with Watergate didn't seem to concern Brezhnev, in any case it wouldn't have happened in Moscow. He had a simple message for the American people, valid then, some say now in doubt - the Cold War is over. Mr Brezhnev was then at the height of his political power. Only later did he and his machine appear to slow down and stagnate.



But he still had some successes to go. He and President Ford signed a disarmament agreement in Vladivostock.

In 1975 he welcomed Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Mr Callaghan to Moscow. That was the time when Russian and British leaders still could joke with each other. His greatest achievement was at the European security conference in Helsinki.

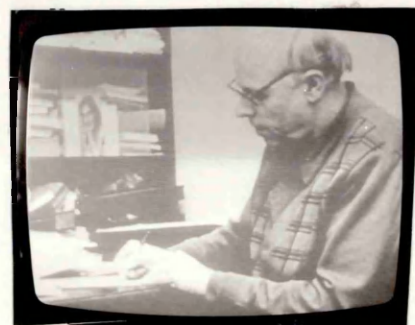
He secured Western acceptance of the Soviet Union's post-war boundaries. In the eyes of his people it brought him international respectability, something communist leaders strive to attain. But the event took its toll with Mr Brezhnev. From that point on his health deteriorated.



Brezhnev's efforts at detente culminated in a meeting with President Carter in Vienna for final negotiations on the Salt 2 treaty. It was aimed at limiting strategic weapons. But the treaty was never ratified by Congress, East-West relations were moving into a difficult period, not helped by allegations of Soviet maltreatment of dissidents.



The writer Alexander Solzenitsyn was harrassed then exiled abroad.



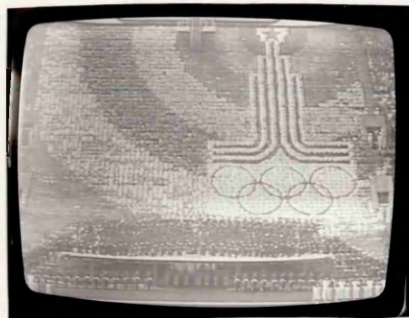
The Nobel Prize winner Andrei Sakharov exiled internally. Other dissidents were given long jail sentences under rigorous conditions. Systematically, opposition to Brezhnev was decimated.

In contrast Mr Brezhnev encouraged the pursuit of Soviet excellence. Continual advances in space travel and sporting achievement, the prestige symbols of communist society.



In Brezhnev's final years, the West became increasingly suspicious of his intentions. The Soviet military build-up continued, outstripping NATO in a number of areas.

The invasion of Afghanistan produced shock in the West but no Russian remorse. Soviet troops stayed where they were, fighting an increasingly bloody war.



Because of Afghanistan the Moscow Olympics were not the international spectacle the Russians had hoped for. 60 countries stayed away in protest, but the games were useful propaganda, most of the world had after all, finally come to Moscow.



Poland is the major international problem that Brezhnev leaves his successor.

Despite the imposition of martial law the country remains unstable. It's there that his departure will be watched with some trepidation. Whoever succeeds him will want to assert himself quickly in that country.

c) International Reaction

Nc: Messages of condolence to the Kremlin have been sent from world leaders, including the Queen, Mrs Thatcher and Michael Foot. The first East European country to react was Poland. Its message described Mr Brezhnev as a great friend who understood Poland's problems. For American reaction, Martin Bell reports from Washington.

Crr: The Russians here are in mourning, their embassy flag at half mast, and there is no comfort for the Americans either in the news from Moscow.

It reached the White House on Veterans day, when the United States honours its servicemen and war dead, and at the White House ceremony President Reagan spoke of his plans for defence and his hopes for peace.



stable balance of forces, a mutual reduction of weapons and a better understanding between the Soviet Union, the United States and all nations. Earlier day we received word of the death of the Soviet President Brezhnev and I want to read to you if I might the letter that I've sent this morning to Vasily Kuznetsov, First Deputy Chairman of the Presidium in Moscow.

'Please accept my condolences on the death of President Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. President Brezhnev was one of the world's most important figures for nearly two decades. May I ask you to convey our sympathies to the President's family. I would also like to convey, through you to the Soviet government and people the strong desire of the United States to work toward an improved relationship with the Soviet Union. I look forward to conducting relations with the new leadership of the Soviet Union for the aim of expanding the areas where our nations can cooperate to mutual advantage.



Crr: That was the most cordial message from Washington to Moscow this year and the United States will looking to the new leadership for some signal of a willingness to start to ease the present tensions. There's little immediate prospect of that, and former President Jimmy Carter said he thought a period of propaganda struggle lay ahead.



Carter: They'll try to prove that the Soviets are more committed to peace, more committed to nuclear arms control than we are, that they are the so-called heroes for the third world and we are the villains, and I think after a period, which may last a few weeks or a few months, we don't know yet, they might try to accomodate the United States in some of the negotiations.

Crr: And a parting word from former President Richard Nixon. As a Russian he said Mr Brezhnev was warm, effusive, ebullient. As a communist, he was a ruthless schemer and a relentless aggressor.

Ne: Moscow's strained relationship with the other communist superpower China was reflected in the low key Chinese reaction to today's news. Our far East correspondent Jim Biddulph has been monitoring Peking's coverage.



Crr: One of Leonid Brezhnev's last aims was to heal the breach with the world's biggest communist nation, the 1000 million Chinese. Judging by tonight's Chinese television news, Mr Brezhnev did not get very far. The announcement of his death was one of the last headlines in the bulletin. Anyone who was interested had then to wait through a long series of domestic reports about how well people were doing in Chinese industry and agriculture. The official announcement of Mr Brezhnev's death was squeezed in as item number 15 after a report about silkworms. The item itself lasted about 20 seconds and did nothing more than repeat the TASS news agency report about the Soviet leader's death. There were no condolences.

d) The succession

Nc: The Soviet Communist Party has formally pledged to continue President Brezhnev's policies and has urged the Russian people to support them. In the West the interest has focussed on the Kremlin and who is likely to become its master. Here's our diplomatic editor John Simpson.



Crr: The first phase of the succession in the Kremlin will in fact already have begun. Because Mr Brezhnev has been ill for so long his colleagues will have settled who'll take over in the short run. It's unlikely to be one man. The Soviet party bosses prefer their leaders to emerge gradually, with as little infighting as possible. So in phase 1 a two or three man group could well take power. A prime minister in charge of government, with the two jobs Mr Brezhnev held, the president which is purely ceremonial, and party secretary, the real power base, divided between two other men.

The contenders for the top job were assembled last Sunday in Red Square, at



what proved to be Mr Brezhnev's last public appearance. To give continuity to the succession Nikolai Tikhonov could well remain for a time as Prime Minister.



That would leave two front runners for the job of general secretary. Constantin Chernenko, who's 65 was Mr Brezhnev's personal aid doing everything from fixing senior appointments to checking how many cigarettes he was smoking. He can plainly operate the Kremlin system, but the top man may need more than that.



The other main contender is Yuri Andropov, until recently chairman of the KGB. More cultivated than the others, a collector of antique furniture and modern Western art he nevertheless suppressed the dissidents with great harshness and played a major role in crushing the Hungarian uprising in 56. In phase two of the succession the new party secretary, whoever he is, would inch ahead of the others as Brezhnev himself did, to become sole leader, but Andropov is 67, only 2 years younger than Chernenko. Their time is short. It may well be that for the third phase of the succession, the long term we should look for men in their 50's, Vladimir Dolghik for instance the politbureau's heavy industry expert, or Mickael Gorbachev in charge of agriculture.

But whoever makes it to the top will have to cope with the immense economic problems, which is one legacy Mr Brezhnev has left to his country's workers. His policies of rigid control from Moscow have made this year's growth rate the worst since the war, while the harvest has been the fourth bad one in a row - worse than in Czarist times.

share. Krushchev tried to cut the military budget, Mr Brezhnev never repeated the mistake, nor will his successors. But now he's gone Western statesmen are grateful for the relative stability he brought.



Callaghan: He was a great stabiliser, we've had a great period of stability, let there be no doubt about that, in the Soviet Union even though they've made advances on the international front, and I think it will be succeeded by a rhythm of change in the Soviet Union and the question is, which influence is going to become dominant. We here in the West will have some kind of indirect influence on that by the tone we adopt in our rhetoric towards the Soviet Union so that I think Brezhnev and Suslov both having gone, there is going to be this new dialogue, and no single leader will be able to emerge who will be able to make compromises until he's secure internally, and so the nature of the compromise that will be required from them, as from the West, will naturally depend upon the way we talk about the future of our relations with the Soviet Union.

Crr: Most Western European governments will take Mr Callaghan's point, arguing that Washington must resist the temptation to act tough while the succession in the Kremlin is being sorted out. But for all that Brezhnev's death means that any remnants of the old policy of detente will either disappear or go into deep freeze, and the strategic arms reduction talks between the superpowers are hardly likely to produce much. Until one man in the Kremlin emerges as overall undisputed leader nothing much will change in the Kremlin's approach. Things will still be run by much the same group of cautious elderly men as before. They'll continue to believe as Brezhnev did in a strong, perhaps an over strong defence, but in one way things will now start to be different. In Eastern Europe where Brezhnev twice smashed efforts to liberalise the communist system most of the men who ran their regimes by his favour are in or near their seventies. Change is always painfully slow in the communist bloc, but Mr Brezhnev's death means that a completely new era can now begin. But that could mean that the post-Brezhnev period could be even less secure

than when he was in power.

Nc: John Simpson reporting on the impact on the West of President Brezhnev's death, announced at 8' 0 clock this morning.

a) Introductions

Nc: Brezhnev is dead, the difference it may make.

Another funeral, another struggle to rule the Soviet Union.

President Reagan tells Moscow he wants a new start.

Lech Walesa, Brezhnev's last victim, will soon be free.



Good evening. The death of Mr Brezhnev in the Soviet Union has brought the first stirrings in the West of trying to get on better with the next Soviet leader.

President Reagan in Washington has spoken of an improved relationship, better relations, an active dialogue, though noone is speaking of an early summit meeting yet.

The Polish communist government is speaking of releasing the Solidarity leader, Mr Lech Walesa, it was moving that way while Mr Brezhnev was still alive.

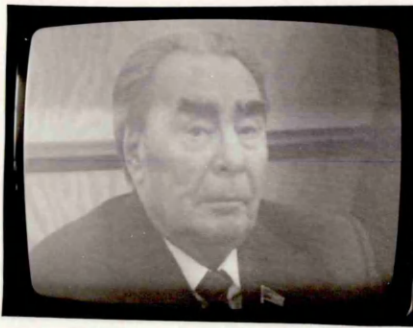


Moscow's orderly streets heard the official announcement this morning.

Moscow Radio announcer: The name of Leonid Brezhnev, a staunch continuator of Lenin's great cause, and an ardent fighter for peace aand communism will live for ever in the hearts of the Soviet people and the whole of progressive humanity.

Nc: Mr Brezhnev died of a heart attack. He was 75. He'll lie in state for three days and be buried on Monday near Lenin.

b) The career



In the 18 years in which he ran the Soviet Union the West found him angry about war, cool in negotiation, and a man who liked fast cars and John Wayne films, who tried and failed often to cut down on his smoking. His public face he tried to keep impassive.



Leonid Brezhnev lingered at the top of the Soviet state. The party had been his life for more than 50 years. The business of power was his business, In return he liked attention and praise. He liked medals.



But as he faced the 26th Party Congress the idea grew that his day was passing. His was a slow cautious, conservative communism, in his Russia stability had become inertia. Beyond his borders he had only one answer to the change that threatened his system - stop it! He did so in Czechoslovakia, in Afghanistan and Poland.



At the end of 1979 he ordered the Afghan invasion. The Soviet leadership had learned from America's impotence when militant Islam swept through Iran, they were determined it wouldn't happen in Afghanistan, especially as it might spread to the Soviet Union's own burgeoning Muslim population. So the tanks went in.

In Poland there was a bigger threat. The Poles had developed a form of social democracy that stripped the communists of much of their power. Lech Walesa's revolution had to be put down, and Brezhnev found Poles willing to do it.

Then early this year Mikhail Suslov died. He had been the kingmaker and with him

gone Brezhnev seemed exposed and at a loss. Suslov had nurtured the personality cult that surrounded Brezhnev and gave it ideological legitimacy. With Suslov dead this very cult became a weapon against him. It was openly suggested that the old man should step down.

He had arrived in 1964 as part of a collective leadership but that fiction was laid to rest 13 years later when he rewrote Stalin's constitution and made himself president as well as party secretary.



He was born here in the Ukraine a decade before Lenin's Bolshevik revolution and it was this man, Nikita Krushchev, who Brezhnev ousted, who guided his early career.



Brezhnev became Krushchev's protege during the war, as a colonel in the Red Army's political service. Increasingly Soviet publications had to dwell in detail on his war, one writer recounting how he fought the nazis with a machine gun as he sat in a pool of blood.



Brezhnev left no one in doubt in 1968 when he sent his tanks into Prague to snuff out the Czech attempt at communism with a human face. His justification became known as the Brezhnev doctrine. Soviet troops would march in wherever Russian domination appeared threatened. Two years later, the Prague Spring long since withered, Brezhnev was naturally cheered on a visit to his friends.



The end of the '60's saw the ideological split with the Chinese develop into something more serious. For a while the border skirmishes threatened to spread into outright war between the two giants of communism.

The middle east was also a running sore for him. In successive wars between Israel and the Arabs, massive quantities of Russian arms were destroyed or abandoned. Soviet influence all but evaporated.



But elsewhere Brezhnev did better, particularly in Cuba with Fidel Castro. The bearhug in 1974 sealed Soviet support for Cuba's intervention in Angola.

Brezhnev with a flagging economy and a perennial grain shortage did not want an arms race with the United States. He seemed to like Richard Nixon, and was disappointed by his fall. Together they talked about arms control and about ideas for freedom of speech and thought, but it didn't happen.

Still detente became a catchword and there were those like President Pompidou of France who found it convenient too. But Brezhnev himself seemed a man without the energy to bring it off. His instinct was to cling on.

In the spring of 1978 he made his second trip to West Germany. There he saw Herr Willy Brandt and Chancellor Schmidt. His health was now obviously poor and he had trouble with his speech. The very voice of communism seemed faltering.



But the axe of communism was forthright against dissidents. A troublemaker like Solzenitsyn was exiled to the West. Others were not so lucky. For them, mental hospitals or prison.

In 1980 the Olympic Games went to the Soviet Union without American athletes. Brezhnev insisted that the Games must go ahead and he got backing from the sports establishment in Western Europe. It was a propaganda success - an impression of a peaceful sporting Soviet Union without foreign involvement or economic worry.

Relations with the United States had gone



from good to bad under the current administration.

When Ronald Reagan got to the White House they went from bad to worse. Brezhnev now faced a man who was also conservative, who also kept his guard up, and who believed that in economic and military competition it would be the Soviet system that failed.

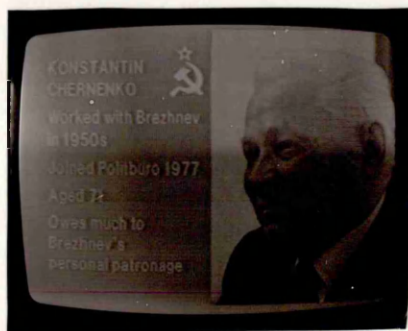


Brezhnev was of the old guard. He took advantage where he could in the world, but to the very end, to his last appearance in Red Square on Sunday, he kept the Soviet Union a garrison state. Under him, there was no Russian Spring.

c) The succession

There's no official word yet on who will succeed Mr Brezhnev but there is speculation that the twin jobs of head of state and communist party general secretary will in future be separated. The key post is general secretary. Our diplomatic editor Michael Brunson has been looking at the most likely options.

Crr: Among the men around him, the battle to succeed Mr Brezhnev began months, if not years ago. Certainly by the time of that funeral of the old party chief Mikhail Suslov last January there were 4 contenders. Yuri Andropov, then head of the KGB; Victor Grishin the Moscow party chief; Andrei Kirilenko in charge of party organisation, and Constantin Chernenko, the politbureau chief of staff. But as the year progressed and Mr Brezhnev became evermore frail the position altered. Illness and changing political fortunes meant that by the time Mr Brezhnev died there were just 2 leading candidates.



First, Mr Chernenko. He has always been close to Mr Brezhnev, working with him in Moldavia in the '50's, though not joining the politbureau till 5 years ago. His age, 71 is, in Soviet terms not a serious

problem. But the fact that he owes so much to Mr Brezhnev's personal patronage may be, if an anti-Brezhnev faction now emerges in the politbureau.



Mr Andropov the other front runner, first came to prominence as Soviet ambassador to Hungary during the 56 uprising. His influence grew enormously in the years since 67 when he became head of the KGB. He joined the politbureau in 1973 and he's 68. And in May this year he left the KGB to take over Mr Suslov's old job. A very definite promotion.

All the manouevring behind Mr Brezhnev's back this year may mean that the politbureau have already decided among themselves who the new general secretary is, ready for the central committee, which had a meeting planned for Monday anyway, to approve that choice.



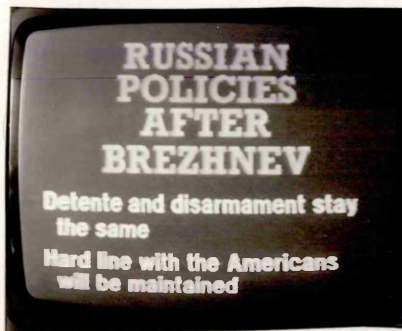
If it is Mr Chernenko, that increases the chance of very little change indeed in Soviet policy. Though he travelled to Paris this year he is not a man of wide horizons - a party apparitchik, a loyalist through and through, in charge of things like the politbureau agenda and party propaganda.



Mr Andropov by contrast, here speaking in the Kremlin, is a more sophisticated character, though as a former head of the KGB he's no liberal. But he speaks English for example, likes to dress well, and is generally thought to be more flexible, more ready to consider new ideas.



Whoever takes over, and the Moscow party chief Mr Grishin also has a chance, is not going to make sudden changes.



The Russians have already said that their policies on detente and disarmament will stay the same. The hard line against the Americans will be maintained, with the continued presence of Mr Gromyko, perhaps as president, ensuring that. The so-called Brezhnev doctrine, holding Eastern Europe in line will stay, perhaps to be tested first by General Jaruzelski's releasing of Lech Walesa and the lifting of martial law. If change comes it will probably be seen first over internal affairs. Mr Andropov for example may decide to try new ideas for dealing with the Soviet Union's very serious economic problems.

Under the ailing Mr Brezhnev there had to be a collective leadership anyway but to the last he held the politbureau together, insisting on a consensus. As his influence fades we could begin to see some changes.

d) International reaction

Nc: President Reagan said today America wanted better relations, he said Mr Brezhnev had been one of the most important figures of the past 20 years, and all former American presidents had their say. Mr Nixon said Mr Brezhnev was a ruthless schemer and a relentless aggressor who wanted the world but did not want war. John Suchet is in Washington.

Crr: President Reagan was woken at half past three this morning with the news of Mr Brezhnev's death though it's thought here he knew about it unofficially before he went to bed. Today at a White House ceremony for veteran soldiers the President said he looked forward to cooperating with the country's new leaders and there were comments too from three former presidents and a former secretary of state.



Reagan: I've said for many years there are fundamental differences between the

Soviet system and our own system here in the United States, but I believe our peoples, for all our differences share a desire and a dedication to peace.



Carter: I think there'll be a struggle throughout the Western world and throughout the developing nations just for propaganda advantage. They'll try to prove that the Soviets are more committed to peace, more committed to nuclear arms control than we are, that they are the so-called heroes for the third world and we are the villains, and I think after this period, which may last for a few months or a few weeks, we don't know yet, they'll probably try to accomodate the United Nations in some of the negotiations.

Kissinger: I believe that he wanted peace, but I also think that he did not have enough imagination to know that peace required a major intellectual effort, and not simply minor adjustments in an existing direction. By the time I met him, which was when most of our people got to meet him, he was already exhausted from a lifetime of struggle.

Crr: The immediate diplomatic problem facing the administration is, should President Reagan go to Mr Brezhnev's funeral? The probable answer is no, but in order to stress how deeply the United States wants detente, despite Mr Brezhnev's harsh words last week, the administration will probably send its second highest-ranking member, Vice-president George Bush. John Suchet, News at Ten in Washington.

Nc: The Queen and Mrs Thatcher have both sent messages of condolence to Moscow. Mrs Thatcher said Mr Brezhnev's wide-ranging and long experience would be a serious loss to the Soviet Union and the consequences of his death would be felt far beyond the frontiers of his own country. The foreign secretary Mr Pym said he didn't expect sudden or major

changes but said Mr Brezhnev's successor must recognise the Soviet Union had a great responsibility for international peace. The Labour leader Mr Foot also sent condolences. Sir Harold Wilson, the last British Prime Minister to meet Mr Brezhnev.

Wilson: I think he was essentially a moderate. He had a very violent temper, as we heard from time to time exploding - he had a little explosion with me about something, I can't remember what it was - but he soon came round, and one wonders whether that temper did mean that sometimes he was gonna take a very hard line.

Owen: I think he was a tough and determined man. I think the way he masterminded the clampdown in Poland, which I believe the Soviet Union were behind throughout all its stages, showed a degree of sophistication and skill in the conduct of foreign policy but also, absolute determination, after all the Brezhnev doctrine was that he would not accept interference in any communist country in their sphere of influence, and he then widened that to cover Afghanistan, so nobody should think he was a moderate man.

Callaghan: I would indicate very quietly to the Soviet Union, look, I'd say to them, when things have settled down we're ready to talk to your leaders. We've all got a lot to discuss about the future of the world, so let us know when you're ready and meantime, I would drop some of the harsh rhetoric we're hearing to as to give the opportunity for those who will be discussing what nature the new leadership should be to say, look, the West are ready to talk, and b), they are not using the language of destabilisation and aggression that they have been using. This is the best way I think, to make a new breakthrough.

Nc: In part two how Poland reacted to Brezhnev's death and the news that Lech Walesa is to be released. Also in this specially extended News at Ten, the arms race and what happens to detente now that Russia's leader has gone...

In Poland the Solidarity leader Mr Lech Walesa, the man Brezhnev had imprisoned,

is to be released. Mr Walesa has been held in isolation for 11 months since the military takeover. The Poles would not have let him go without Soviet permission. They said today he no longer poses a threat to the internal security of the state. As Nick Gowing reports from Warsaw, the Poles took Brezhnev's death in their stride.

Crr: There were few pictures, almost no outward signs of President Brezhnev's death. Poles seemed indifferent to the news. Evening newspapers carried this brief obituary and a picture of a middle-aged Brezhnev. The flag flew at half-mast at the Soviet embassy. Senior government ministers, including Prime Minister General Jaruzelski signed a book of condolence, but the flag was not lowered at the Polish communist party headquarters. The authorities talked of sorrow at the loss of a friend. Whoever takes over from Mr Brezhnev will fundamentally affect the future direction of the Polish crisis. Since Solidarity was born two years ago Moscow has wielded great influence although the government boasts of its independence here. But was it Mr Brezhnev's say alone, or towards the end was it the say of the politburo men in Moscow now vying for power? If so observers here believe things will change little although one source told ITN that Mr Brezhnev's death would be a destabilising factor here. Then tonight came the unexpected news of Lech Walesa's release.

This is how he was last seen in public, in despair at Solidarity's last national meeting 11 months ago, several hours before martial law was declared. He told colleagues that phones had been cut. This is how Poles remember him, the hero who led the shipyard strike that led to the creation of the Eastern bloc's first and only trade union, Solidarity. According to the government press spokesmen tonight, when Lech Walesa is released he'll be just plain citizen Walesa. Solidarity is now an illegal organisation, so he has no union to lead. Now the government has released the text of a letter he wrote to Prime Minister General Jaruzelski three days ago.

Walesa says: "I think the time has come to explain certain things, and to start

acting towards accord. I propose a meeting and a serious discussion on subjects of interest. Given goodwill, a solution will be found". But tonight the government said his release guaranteed no meeting.

Tonight Mrs Walesa said in Gdansk she had not been officially told yet that her husband would be released. She said she does not believe it, and will only believe it when she sees him. What is really behind the decision to release Lech Walesa is unclear, is it a gamble to buy peace, to convince the new Soviet leader that Solidarity is dead, the problem solved. Or is it the first move over a long period to entice Solidarity leaders into the new less powerful unions, the same unions over which people have struck and protested.

Nc: President Brezhnev was an enthusiastic supporter of detente with the West but under his leadership there was no let up in Soviet military spending. Russia has consistently spent over 1/8 of its national income on defence, that's about twice the proportion of most Western countries. Brezhnev had hoped detente would reduce this economic burden but there now seems little prospect of a change. Here's our defence correspondent Geoffrey Archer.

Crr: The best indicator we have of future Soviet policy toward the West came two weeks ago when Mr Brezhnev himself. He was addressing a gathering of Soviet military leaders. He bitterly attacked America for unfolding an 'unprecedented arm race' and appeared to all but abandon hopes of arms control agreements with the USA. And diplomatic observers in the West expect that attitude from Moscow to persist in the months ahead. The zero option talks to stop deployment next year of new American missiles in Europe in exchange for Russia's dismantling of her SS-20s have been under way for a year in Geneva without success. The American and Russian negotiators cannot agree on what weapons should be included in the talks. Russia wants French and British missiles included but America refuses. And the US says Russia is now stalling the talks while trying to exploit divisions in the Western alliance. President Brezhnev's death is unlikely to loosen that

Stalinist. Under the leadership of Brezhnev, Russia's armed forces have undergone a technological revolution in recent years. Soviet ground forces in Europe have been considerably strengthened by new weapons like the T-72 tanks on display last week in Moscow, and Russia spent vast sums of money on the development of new weapons in space. Large numbers of navigation and communication satellites have been launched, and new radar satellites which can track NATO ships at sea. And in the past decade, the Soviet navy has expanded dramatically, with a new ability to project power worldwide. Russia's purpose with all this technology is to try to catch up with America. Russian technical specialists are increasingly taking top posts in the military high command. Their instinct may be to press forward with new more advanced weapons rather than make compromises over arms control. Before he died President Brezhnev acknowledged those technocrats' views by announcing plans to increase Soviet combat readiness in all respects including technology. So the signs so far are that the East-West arms race will continue as before.

Now: Certain Kremlin-watchers are saying tonight that because Mr Yuri Andropov, the former head of the KGB is organising the Brezhnev funeral, as Nikita Khrushchev organised Stalin's, that he's now the favourite to succeed, but whoever wins the power, well, whoever gets the power, his first problem is not the Americans or the Bomb, or Poland, but the Soviet Union.

First, the very immensity of the land, stretching half-way around the world, eight and a half million square miles of it, a huge political and administrative headache.

Second, in this land the Russians themselves are about to become the minority. There are 260 million Soviet citizens at the last census last year. Just 159 million of them live in the Russian republic. The big population explosion is out in muslim Asia, among the Uzbeks and Kazhaks, that is why the Soviet Union went into make sure of Afghanistan.

Third, the Soviet Union is increasingly

an urban society. The next census should find it 2/3 urban, only 1/3 rural. The shift off the land is unstoppable. It means growing urban problems familiar to the West, with hooliganism and alcoholism, and in a flagging economy,

there's zero economic growth, lagging technology, and 15% of production spent on defence, plus repeated grain harvest failures. Grain imports cost 4200 million pounds last year, and subsidies keep Poland, Cuba and other satellites alive.

Fourth, the Soviet city dwellers are well-educated, not just the scientists but the new industrial managers, the sons and daughters of the first post-war new class in communist society. They are privately increasingly contemptuous of the political system that deprives them of more than material things. In the history of revolutions it is those who are better off who are most dangerous, and that seems the real challenge for whoever is Brezhnev's real successor.

NC: One Westerner who knew President Brezhnev well was Doctor Armand Hammer, the head of Occidental Petroleum, one of the world's biggest oil companies. Doctor Hammer has been going to Russia since 1921 when he persuaded Lenin to trade Russian furs for American grain. He was one of the very few outsiders to get a glimpse of President Brezhnev's private life, and he for one liked what he saw.

Hammer: I think he was a warm-hearted man, he was very human. I dined with him, I spent the weekend with him at Yalta, and I came away with the impression that he was a great force for peace, and that he would give his life for peace, as he told me with tears in his eyes.

Crr: Did he have a lifestyle that was inconsistent with the normal one of Soviet leaders? One hears that he had a fleet of cars for instance. Did he have an austere or a luxurious lifestyle by Soviet standards?

Hammer: Well he loved fast cars. He liked to drive fast cars, that was his hobby, but he lived comparatively simply. He had a fleet of limousines and he used the , for example, he placed the Czar's yacht

at the disposal of Mrs Hammer and I when we were there, it was the same yacht that the Czar had used, but I don't think Brezhnev used it very often, I think he used it to entertain heads of state. His home at Yalta, the place where he entertained me, was built by Stalin not by Brezhnev but it was adequate, very impressive, and of course there was plenty of food of all kinds and drink.

coverage of the funeral was briefer. Live pictures of the event were supplied by Soviet television, and journalists commented on these throughout.

BBC1 2100 15/11/82



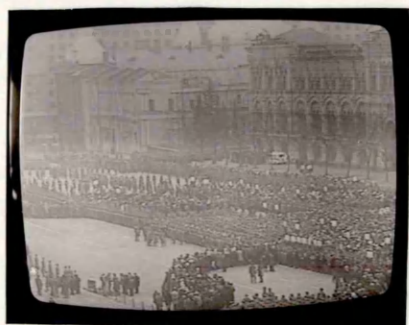
Nc: Leonid Brezhnev, ruler of the Soviet empire for nearly two decades has been buried in Moscow's Red Square. More than 70 countries, East and West were represented but few Western leaders were there. Most sent their deputies or foreign ministers.



Still, the new Soviet party chief, Yuri Andropov took the opportunity for some hectic diplomatic contacts, once the burial was over. In public he met the American delegation led by Vice-President George Bush for just one minute, and the Chinese for three. The longer meetings came later.



The funeral ceremony itself was a blend of Soviet military pomp, communist ideology and Russian orthodox ritual. Our Moscow correspondent John Osman describes the scene.



Crr: From the moment when carefully-marshalled crowds moved into position, it was obvious that this was going to be an impressively stage-managed event. From the lying in state the coffin was moved to Red Square, a quarter of a mile away. Huge wreaths were carried as well as Mr Brezhnev's many honours borne by Soviet generals and admirals. The coffin was on

a gun carriage hauled by an armoured car. Mr Brezhnev's family followed behind, his widow Victoria dressed in black, his son Yuri, his daughter Galina.



Some members of the Kremlin ruling circle, the Politbureau, also joined the cortege on foot. In slow march time the procession moved up the hill towards Red Square where people held portraits of Brezhnev just as if they were icons. Promptly before midday the cortege arrived before Lenin's tomb and the open coffin was placed before the mausoleum. The first speech came from Mr Andropov. He said the Soviet Union was ready to give a crushing rebuff to any attempt at aggression. A second keynote speech came from defence minister Dimitri Ustinov, underlining the military flavour and the political implications of the occasion. With the help of stalwart soldiers, Mr Brezhnev's old Politbureau colleagues acted as pallbearers. In the shadow of the Kremlin wall where figures from history like Stalin lie buried the Soviet leaders looked on as Mr Brezhnev's family said their last farewells.



It was a Russian ritual which has survived the centuries and the atheism of the Soviet state. It has an orthodox Christian tradition. At the moment of burial guns were fired in salute, and factory sirens sounded. Handfuls of soil were thrown into the grave in another immemorial gesture. The ceremony over, a brisk marchpast followed by the Moscow garrison.



At a Kremlin reception Mr Andropov received many of the foreign guests and had a notably cordial chat with the visiting Chinese foreign minister Huang Wa, the highest ranking Chinese official

to visit Moscow for 20 years, after decades of bitterness between the two great neighbouring countries. The chat lasted for 20 minutes, longer than any other diplomatic encounter in public. The gesture was presumably designed to demonstrate the Soviet desire to improve relations with China.

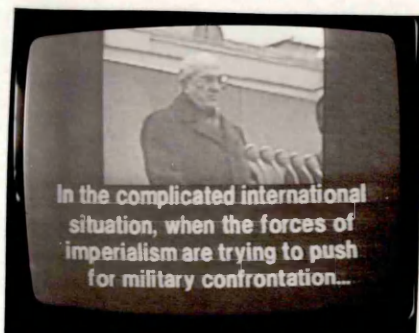


There was one aspect, small enough in itself which caught the eye of some Western observers at the reception there. For the first time since the less inhibited days of Nikita Krushchev Western journalists were allowed in to witness a major state occasion. Its possible that by inviting them Mr Andropov was trying to demonstrate that the atmosphere in the Kremlin has changed just a little towards the West.

If it has, then the half hour that American vice-president George Bush spent afterwards with Mr Andropov will have provided some more evidence of it. Mr Bush said later that the talks had been "cordial and substantive", which probably means they didn't get anywhere in particular. But TASS did say that Mr Andropov had spoken of "being prepared to build relations with the United States". Still, no sudden changes of policy are likely in the Kremlin.



And when Mr Andropov gave the funeral oration for his dead predecessor, warnings and promises seemed pretty evenly balanced. "In the complicated international situation" he said, "when the forces of imperialism are trying to push for military confrontation the party will firmly uphold the vital interests of our homeland and give a crushing rebuff to any attempt at aggression. But then we are always", said Mr Andropov, "ready for honest, equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with any state willing to cooperate".



His colleague Marshal Ustinov who as defence minister has presided over an unprecedented military build-up was also carefully even-handed. "The Soviet armed forces", he said, "will continue to be a mighty factor of peace and security. They are constantly ready to defend the inviolability of their borders and discharge their international duty".

Well Western analysts faced on the one hand with offers of peace, and on the other with warnings that the Soviet Union will keep its guard up are trying to work out which approach is genuine and which is put in for the sake of form. The chances are that both are genuine because the Russians themselves don't yet know what the American approach is going to be. At the moment then, the keynote is complete uncertainty, and several Western leaders are starting to demand some kind of sign from the Kremlin about its promised goodwill. Among them is Mrs Thatcher.

She's speaking in London tonight, at the Lord Mayor's banquet at Guildhall, and she'll be addressing the problem. Mrs Thatcher is likely to call for genuine evidence that the Russians are serious about multilateral disarmament. Her position is that if they come up with such signs the West's response will be welcome and quick.

The Americans for their part also want particular evidence of a new Soviet approach to Afghanistan and Poland. It's difficult. Afghanistan, where the Soviet military position is gradually improving at a great cost in human lives may not be the place to make gestures. But there was one figure in the lineup at today's funeral reception in the Kremlin, General Jaruzelski of Poland who may help the Soviet Union to give precisely the kind of sign the Americans want. If he could deliver an end to martial law there soon, it could be the beginning of a whole new chapter in East-West relations.



Nc: Good evening. The new Soviet Communist Party chief, Mr Yuri Andropov, met the United States' Vice-president Mr George Bush in Moscow today after the funeral of President Brezhnev. Their talk lasted just half an hour. Mr Bush said it was "frank, cordial and substantive". Mr Andropov said he wanted relations based on "full equality, non-interference, mutual respect and what he called a revitalising of the international atmosphere. Mr Andropov also spoke cordially to the Chinese and to Mrs Gandhi, and to the West German President Herr Karl Kastens. Other West Europeans were not quite so favoured.



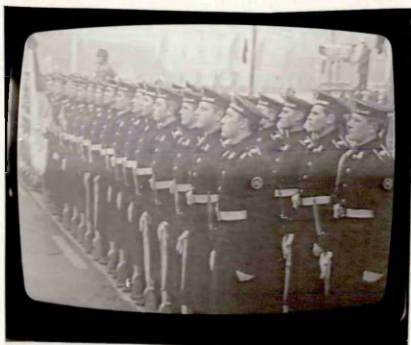
The Foreign Secretary Mr Francis Pym was given half an hour with the Soviet Foreign Minister Mr Gromyko. There was a long receiving line in the Kremlin, of 32 heads of state, 15 prime ministers and just about every foreign minister and ambassador who could get there.



Intent on being there were the Polish puppet General Jaruzelski, who was among those who queued patiently for their handshake. And also Cuba's bearded Fidel Castro. Their new master was holding a party. One of the few non-communist faces Soviet viewers would recognise was Mrs Gandhi, with Afghanistan on her mind. And she bowed to Brezhnev's picture. From the West Canada's Prime Minister Mr Trudeau.



They came to Red Square today to bury Brezhnev, and not particularly to praise him. All who were there were there by official invitation. So it is when dictators die.



Others were there by orders.

They carried him out from the House of Unions where he had lain in state.



They mourned him because for 18 years he had kept the Soviet system intact. His military funeral was meant to confirm his system.



A small armoured car drew the gun carriage with his coffin. It was a better-ordered funeral than Stalin's, and such grief as there was was probably genuine. And the military carried the medals he liked so much. So he came into Red Square, where so often he had been the man of power, only the third Soviet leader to be buried there.



The lid was taken off the coffin and he lay looking up almost symbolically at the new rulers who had succeeded him on Lenin's tomb, where he had been 8 days before. His old friend had come, Indira Gandhi who spoke her mind, and the clients who didn't - Jaruzelski from Poland, Castro from Cuba and Yasser



Andropov and Andropov spoke. Andropov and the Prime Minister Tikhonov carried the coffin. And his widow Victoria, his daughter and his son said goodbye in an older ritual than the atheistic state allowed, and his companions and friends and rivals watched, their last glimpse of him. They let him down into the grave of the Leninist Heroes quickly, an abrupt end to 18 years. And the sirens sounded over Moscow, over the Soviet Union. Grains of earth, and then shovelfuls of it. The Moscow garrison marched by. The infantry he had fought with came back into their own. It may be that the future will say that Brezhnev's chief achievement was to create nothing but a Soviet navy.

Appendix 3.2. References to the Soviet economy in main news coverage of the deaths of Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko.

BBC

Andropov's priority was Soviet industry, to make it efficient, tighten discipline, remove corruption. Bosses were fired, there was limited success

[Andropov had] limited success

(1 2100 10/2/84)

the 1984 harvest was the worst in a decade, and for once there was more to blame than the weather

Chernenko attacked inefficiency at all levels but his government, like others before it, had to spend its hard currency and buy its way out of a grain crisis

(1 2100 11/3/85)

ITN

The crisis which erupted in Poland in 1980 revealed the chronic economic ills of the entire Soviet system.

(4 1900 11/11/82)

a flagging economy and a perennial grain shortage.

very serious economic problems

a flagging economy, zero economic growth, lagging technology.

repeated grain harvest failures.

grain imports cost £4,200 million last year, and subsidies keep Poland, Cuba and other satellites alive.

(3 2200 11/11/82)

day-to-day problems ingrained in Soviet life queues, shoddy goods, erratic deliveries, bad planning, inefficiency, but most ingrained and insidious of all, corruption and exploitation of privilege.

endemic corruption

impressive signs of progress in the first few months [of Andropov's leadership].

a perceptible improvement.

last year official figures showed a 4% increase in national output.

(4 1900 10/2/84)

Andropov wanted to get rid of corruption and time-wasting and absenteeism. He sacked ministers and officials who built personal fortunes, and the police and the militia went into the shops to force the absentees back to work.

(3 2200 10/2/84)

Gorbachev warned the Central Committee that much still has to be done to get the Soviet economy back on its feet.

agriculture has suffered from a hard winter and there's a great deal to do. Last year's grain harvest was less than previous years and of lower quality, and the lack of coordination between various economic sectors, poor management and rising costs have hit Soviet productivity all round.

(4 1900 11/3/85)

1) 3 2200 10/5/83

Newsreader: Syria has again talked about a new war with Israel over Lebanon. Syria, which is armed and backed by Russia, turned down the deal for Israeli troop withdrawal from Lebanon negotiated by the American Secretary of State Mr George Schultz last week. That depended on simultaneous withdrawal of Syrian and PLO troops. Today Mr Schultz called on the Soviet Union to get on the side of peace in Lebanon and support America's attempts to get all foreign troops out.

Correspondent: The evacuation of Soviet diplomatic families from Beirut yesterday rang alarm bells in the Middle East. The Russians had done the same thing in Damascus in 1973, just before war broke out. The Soviets said it was just holiday time, but Israel sees it as Russia trying to pressurise the Lebanese government not to sign the agreement which America negotiated for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. If that agreement were carried out fully, and all foreign troops left Lebanese soil it would be seen as a major diplomatic victory for America and Russia wouldn't like that.

Syria has 40,000 troops in Lebanon and they will have to be withdrawn too if Israel is to remove her forces fully. During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon last year Syria's forces were crushed and humiliated. President Assad of Syria had failed to prevent the Palestinians from being defeated, but thanks to Russian aid worth up to \$2 billion Syria's forces have been rebuilt, as this recent fly-past of new Soviet fighters over Damascus showed. Also President Assad has recently been reconciled with PLO leader Yasser Arafat and may have allowed some 2,000 Palestinian fighters to infiltrate back into Syrian-controlled parts of Lebanon to reinforce 10,000 or so Palestinians already there. President Assad was not involved in the negotiations over withdrawal from Lebanon, and national pride wouldn't let him accept what America's Mr Schultz presented, but Syria is genuinely worried about the continuing Israeli role in Lebanon that that agreement would permit. Syria's war-like noises over Lebanon are probably designed to show the Arab world she is a force to be reckoned with again and to try to make life difficult for the Israelis who desperately want to get their troops home from Lebanon. But even with her new Russian support it's unlikely Syria really wants another war.

2) 3 2200 13/5/83

Newsreader: In New York the American Defence Secretary Mr Weinberger said that the Soviet build-up in Syria made agreement more difficult and increased the danger of war between Syria and Israel.

3) 1 2100 16/5/83

Correspondent: The Syrian war cries are backed by an enormous influx of Soviet military equipment. Hundreds of T-72

subtleties, artillery pieces and aircraft have replaced the losses of last year's conflict with Israel. Whenever they take on the Israelis the Syrians lose, but it's not deterred them before. The Israelis want out of Lebanon, but they won't leave the Syrians there and if pushed hard enough they may decide to give the Syrians a bloody nose. Their big guns are lined up along the Syrian border in range of Damascus. If they use them it could involve some of the 5,000 Russian advisers now attached to the Syrian army, and that might draw in the United States, already committed to maintaining the peace in Lebanon. It's a matter of opinion whether the war-like noises now emanating from Syria and her PLO allies are just rhetoric or a build-up to war. The problem is that rhetoric can get out of hand.

4) 3 2200 19/5/83

Newscaster: President Reagan says he's going to announce in the next few days that America will sell 75 F-15 bombers to Israel. He froze the sale when Israel invaded Lebanon last year but the block has been removed now Israel has signed the agreement to withdraw its forces. The American Defence Secretary Mr Casper Weinberger is worried about the Soviet military build-up in Syria.

* A transcript of the Channel 4 item of May 17th referred to above is not available.

BBC

[Brezhnev] presided over the biggest military build-up the world has ever seen.

In Brezhnev's final years the Soviet military build-up continued, outstripping NATO in a number of areas.
(1 2100 11/11/82)

Marshal Ustinov as Defence Minister has presided over an unprecedented military build-up.
(1 2100 15/11/82)

Andropov was forced to enlarge the Soviet military machine as missile talks failed and East and West moved further apart.

There are Tomahawk Cruise missiles now in position in England, West Germany and Sicily. And Pershing II rockets capable of hitting targets deep inside Russia less than ten minutes after launch from West Germany have provoked a tough Soviet response. Russian missile submarines are now cruising just 400 miles from America's East coast. Washington too is only a few minutes away from a potential holocaust.
(1 2100 10/2/84)

the funeral over, Soviet [military] power was back in evidence and the stress was on continuity. Communism, as the slogans put it, would be marching on to victory.
(1 2100 13/3/85)

ITN

A second arms limitation treaty was only signed after five long years of haggling and Russia's military might grew alarmingly.
(4 1900 11/11/82)

Brezhnev was an enthusiastic supporter of detente with the West but under his leadership there was no let up in Soviet military spending. Russia has consistently spent over one eighth of its national income on defence, that's about twice the proportion of most Western countries.

there's 15% of production spent on defence.

Under the leadership of Brezhnev Russia's armed forces have undergone a technological revolution in recent years. Soviet ground forces have been considerably strengthened by new weapons like the T-72 tanks on display last week in Moscow, and Russia spent vast sums of money on the development of new weapons in space. Large numbers of navigation and communication satellites have been launched, and new radar satellites which can track NATO ships at sea. And in the past decade the Soviet navy has expanded dramatically, with a new ability to project power worldwide. Russia's purpose with all this technology is to catch up with the Americans. Russian technical specialists are increasingly taking top posts in

forward with new more advanced weapon rather than make compromises over arms control. Before he died President Brezhnev acknowledged these technocrats' views by announcing plans to increase Soviet combat readiness in all respects including technology. So the signs are that the East-West arms race will continue as before.

(3 2200 11/11/82)

it may be that the future will say that Brezhnev's chief achievement was the creation of a Soviet navy.

(3 2200 15/11/82)

as if to emphasise earlier what had been said about Russia's refusal to bow to outside threats the funeral proper ended with a show of military might, with row upon row of the Soviet armed forces parading before their new leader.

(3 2200 14/2/84)

the military parade reminds the world as a new leader takes over of the military power of the Soviet Union.

(3 2200 13/3/85)

BBC1

for President Reagan, the hope of a new start for East-West relations.

The SALT II treaty was never ratified by Congress. East-West relations were moving into a difficult period, not helped by allegations of maltreatment of dissidents.

in 1973 [Brezhnev] visited West Germany, marking a dramatic thaw in East-West relations. Relations improved with the White House after the American withdrawal from Vietnam.

the United States will be looking forward to the new leadership for some signal of a willingness to start to ease the present tensions.

Brezhnev's death means that any remnants of the old policy of detente will either disappear or go into deep freeze, and the strategic arms reduction talks between the two superpowers are hardly likely to produce much.
(1 2100 11/11/82)

some Western leaders are starting to demand some kind of sign from the Kremlin about its promised goodwill.

Mrs Thatcher is likely to call for genuine evidence that the Russians are serious about multilateral disarmament.

'we are always', said Mr Andropov, 'ready for honest, equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with any state willing to cooperate.

Western analysts faced with offers of peace on the one hand, and on the other with warnings are trying to work out which approach is genuine and which is for the sake of form. The chances are that both are genuine because the Russians don't yet know what the American approach is going to be.

if General Jaruzelski could deliver an end to martial law [in Poland] soon it could be the start of a whole new chapter in East-West relations. (1 2100 15/11/82)

the Americans say, we want to talk constructively.

it's thought several Western leaders will use the funeral to make contact with the possible successors and try to improve relations between East and West which have been so cold for so long now.

Western leaders are hoping for an improvement in relations with the Eastern bloc.

[Mrs Thatcher] spoke of the need for new confidence between East and West.

When Mr Brezhnev died neither President Reagan nor Mrs

Thatcher went to Moscow. The chill in East-West relations was already too strong for that, and it was to get worse. But Mrs Thatcher [has] already set out on her own policy of detente with the Eastern bloc.

East-West contacts were shattered [because of the Korean airline disaster].

Yuri Andropov [left] East-West relations at a crucial and dangerous phase.

The key question he'll have to deal with is what to do about the nuclear arms race, whether he'll make any real effort to get the talks going again.

Inside and outside of the Administration there's a sense here of a new opening and a new opportunity for dialogue with the Soviet Union... the President's likely to grasp at it.

(1 2100 10/2/84)

In relations with capitalist countries [Gorbachev said] 'we will always respond to goodwill with goodwill'.

Chernenko [signalled] that Moscow's door was not yet closed but he himself was to do little to open it further. Contacts with Britain continued but the United States remained in Soviet-imposed quarantine and Mr Reagan in his pre-election campaign could do no right.

(1 2100 11/3/85)

During the funeral oration Mr Gorbachev spoke of his desire for good neighbourliness with the rest of the world.

The Western leaders return home tonight apparently encouraged by their talks. There is a new optimism. Dialogue it's felt will be easier.

(1 2100 13/3/85)

ITN

Mr Brezhnev never quite managed to convince President Reagan's America that the old men in the Kremlin were genuinely interested in peace, cooperation and detente.

Will the rather tough sounding statements and the tough stance of President Reagan and the cold war sentiments of his Administration increase the likelihood that a hard liner will emerge to combat the policy of the Americans? (interview question)

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan American-Soviet relations went into irreversible decline.

(4 1900 11/11/82)

the death of Mr Brezhnev has brought the first signs in the West of trying to get on better with the next Soviet leader. President Reagan has spoken of an improved relationship, better relations, an active dialogue, though no-one's speaking of an early summit yet.

Brezhnev did not want an arms race with the United States.

Relations with the United States had gone from good to bad under the Carter Administration. When Ronald Reagan got to the White House they went from bad to worse. Brezhnev now faced a man who was also conservative, who also kept his guard up, and who believed that in economic and military competition it would be the system that failed.

In order to stress how deeply the United States wants detente, despite Mr Brezhnev's harsh words last week, the Administration will probably send its second-highest ranking member, Vice-President George Bush.

there now seems little prospect of a change.

so the signs so far are that the East-West arms race will continue as before.

(3 2200 11/11/82)

might Mr Andropov make any new overtures in pursuit of better relations with the West? (interview question)

(4 1900 15/11/82)

Mr Andropov said he wanted relations based on full equality, non-interference, mutual respect and what he called a revitalising of the international atmosphere.

(3 2200 15/11/82)

The feeling in Washington is that with the uncertainty over Mr Andropov's health now over, a major obstacle to ending the present freeze in relations between the two superpowers may have been cleared away.

[there's now] renewed prospect of an agreement on missile deployment.

East and West were at daggers drawn over [the Korean Airline disaster] and the deployment of missiles in Western Europe.

The question of whether President Reagan should now try for a warmer relationship with Moscow is the immediate problems facing politicians in Washington.

State department officials are cautiously optimistic. Mr George Schultz spoke of a new opportunity.

(4 1900 10/2/84)

That the Americans learnt so late [about Andropov's death] underlines how bad Soviet-American relations have become.

since Bush flew to Brezhnev's funeral and he and Secretary of State George Schultz talked with Mr Andropov 16 months ago there's been effectively no direct American contact with the Soviet leadership.

(3 2200 10/2/84)

Mrs Thatcher has told the new Soviet leader it's time for a

new confidence between East and West.

Mrs Thatcher asks for broader understanding.

Soviet leaders told the thousands of mourners gathered in Red Square that Russia was ready for talks with the West but would not respond to threats.

Russia is ready for realistic dialogue on the basis of equal security which means no concessions on present or future plans for nuclear deployment.

Mr Gromyko criticised the United States for not responding to what he called the Soviet Union's major initiatives for peace.

there's no guarantee that there'll be any radical change of policy which will immediately reduce the present tension between East and West (3 2200 14/2/84)

Gorbachev hinted that he wanted to improve relations with China, and as far as the capitalist countries of the West are concerned he spoke of a policy of peace and coexistence on the basis of mutual trust.

[there's British] determination to improve relations with Russia in all areas.

relations are greatly improved since the last such death in the Soviet family.

America is much more optimistic about life with Mr Gorbachev than ever it was about life with either of his predecessors.

Is he really a different Russian, ready to take a softline with the West? The answer is without doubt no... he still sticks to familiar Soviet themes, deep distrust of the Americans chief among them.

The West will be hoping that in time, the fact that there's a younger man in charge now in Moscow, hopefully one who's more receptive to new ideas, and with the prospect of 20 years or more at the top in which to carry them out, that that will all lead to a very significant improvement in East West relations.

Mr Gorbachev repeated the well-oiled formula about Russia's readiness to maintain neighbourly relations with all countries on the basis of peaceful coexistence.
(4 1900 13/3/85)

compared with previous speeches this was a conciliatory and polished performance.

The West, as Mrs Thatcher predicted, already seems to be finding it a little easier to do business with the Kremlin.

Today President Reagan said he looked forward to cooperating with the country's new leaders.

Then the military parade began. It reminds the world as a new leader takes over of the military power of the Soviet Union, this underlying the tension between East and West over the arms race.

(3 2200 13/3/85)

Chapter Four

"Russia Condemned": The Korean Airline Disaster.

Journalist: Could I ask you for the BBC, what do you think of the way that the Western press has been handling all of this?

Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko: Essentially not objective.

Journalist: Do you think the situation will be cleared up soon?

Gromyko: I think it is clear now.

Journalist: And do you think the world will just forget about the incident soon?

Gromyko: We are sure that you will forget, now facts are at the disposal of the people.(BBC1 2100 7/9/83)

In time the Korean airliner disaster was forgotten, as the Soviet foreign minister predicted at the Madrid Security Conference. Like all such tragedies, it exploded upon the world for a brief period and was then no longer news, replaced by other more pressing concerns. The Korean airline disaster was newsworthy for approximately two weeks. Yet the destruction of KAL 007 was perhaps the single most controversial East-West incident since the Cuban missile crisis. Those two short weeks were the occasion of a bitter propaganda war between the West led by the Reagan Administration, and the Soviet Union, centred on the deaths of 269 civilian passengers and crew. The following analysis examines how the competing views of the Soviet and United States' governments were reported on British television news.

As a major media event, commanding many hours of television coverage in its initial phase, the KAL tragedy provided a classic opportunity to examine the role of broadcasting journalism in propaganda warfare between the

superpowers. There will, it is certain, be further incidents of this kind in the future, and it is of more than passing interest to understand how broadcast news is likely to cover them.

East-West relations were already at a low point in September 1983, and the Korean airline disaster plunged them even deeper into gloom. A little more than two weeks later, President Reagan would succeed in obtaining from a hitherto reluctant Congress approval on increased defence spending, the manufacture of chemical and nerve gas weapons, and funding for the MX missile system. Few observers doubted that the Korean airline disaster was a factor in smoothing the paths of these controversial programmes. In Europe the Geneva arms control talks were in their final, unproductive phase leading up to their breakdown with the arrival of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in December. Western negotiators did not deny that the Korean airline incident affected their approach to the negotiations. Nicholas Ashford in The Times of September 10th, 1983, expressed clearly the likely effects of the incident when he wrote: "the sheer horror of the Russian action will undermine those critics who have accused Reagan of following belligerently interventionist foreign and defence policies. For instance, who now will resist the President's plans to deploy the MX missile and modernise the US nuclear weapons when the adversary has shown itself capable of such cynical brutality?" These words were to prove prophetic.

The stark horror of the Korean airline disaster, and the central facts - that 269 civilian passengers and crew died when their aircraft was shot down by Soviet fighters - were established at an early stage in the crisis. The Soviet news agency TASS first referred to the loss of human life on

September 2nd, 1983, in a statement which "expressed regret over the loss of human life" and there was no denial in any subsequent statement that actions by Soviet defence forces had led to the aircraft's destruction. The ensuing controversy was concerned not with what had happened to the airliner but with the question of why the tragedy had occurred, and who was to blame. In the official United States version of events the aircraft had accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace on a routine commercial flight, where it had been shot down without warning by Soviet fighters. The principal evidence to support this allegation were tape recorded conversations between Soviet fighter pilots monitored by US and Japanese intelligence services in the region. These tapes formed the basis of the first major statement on the incident by the US Secretary of State, George Schultz, as reported by The Times on September 2nd:

At approximately 1600 hours GMT [September 1st] , the aircraft came to the attention of the Soviet radar. It was tracked by the Soviets from that time. The aircraft strayed into Soviet airspace over the Kamchatka Peninsula and over the Sea of Okhotsk and over the Sakhalin Islands. The Soviets tracked the commercial airliner for some two and a half hours.

A Soviet pilot recorded visual contact with the aircraft at 1812 hours. The Soviet plane was, we know, in constant contact with its ground control. At 1821 hours the Korean aircraft was reported by the pilot at 10000 metres. At 1826 hours the Soviet pilot reported that he fired a missile and the target was destroyed.

It was further alleged that the Soviet fighters had been close enough to the airliner to identify it as a civilian plane, and that the Soviet defence forces had been in possession of this knowledge when they attacked. US officials suggested that the incident proved it was now Soviet policy to shoot down civilian airliners that strayed into Soviet

airspace. This version of events was personally championed by the President of the United States, and accepted by US allies and friends around the world.

The Soviet Union's defence became clear by September 2nd.

A TASS statement issued that day argued:

The intrusion into the airspace by the mentioned plane cannot be regarded in any other way than as a pre-planned act. It was obviously thought possible to attain special intelligence aims without hindrance by using civilian planes as a cover (English translation from Soviet News, no.6189).

The 'spy-plane' theory first advanced by the Soviets on September 2nd, and to which they adhered thereafter, rested on circumstantial evidence. Gaps in the US account of events, and a number of remarkable coincidences led the Soviets to conclude that the aircraft's flight-path had not been accidental, and to claim that they had genuinely misidentified the Boeing 747 for a US reconnaissance plane.

The Soviet authorities asked why, for example, if US intelligence had been able to monitor the progress of the KAL flight for several hours, it had not attempted to prevent the disaster taking place by warning the pilot?

The American side cites data which indicate that the relevant US services followed the flight throughout its duration in the most attentive manner. So one may ask that if it were an ordinary flight of a civil aircraft which was under continuous observation, then why were no steps taken from the American side to end the gross violation of the airspace of the USSR and to get the plane back to an international flight route? Why did the American authorities not try to establish contact with the Soviet side and provide it with the necessary data about this flight? Neither was done, though there was ample time for this.

reprinted in Soviet News no. 6189, claimed further evidence for the 'spyplane theory' in the fact that a United States reconnaissance plane, the RC-135, had flown "in the same area on the same altitude" as the Korean airliner. This statement also noted that the airliner's flight had taken it over sensitive military areas, including one site where a missile test was scheduled for the next day. It was claimed that the airliner had flown without navigation lights in the dark, and had failed to respond to warnings and internationally agreed procedures for such incidents. For all these reasons, it was claimed, "the anti-aircraft forces of the area arrived at the conclusion that a reconnaissance aircraft was in the airspace of the USSR".

At the major news conference of September 9th in Moscow Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, General Chief of Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, alleged that the Korean airliner had been acting in concert with the RC-135 in a mission designed to test the Soviet defence system:

The Pentagon's spokesman officially admitted that an RC-135 reconnaissance plane was in the area of the violation of Soviet airspace by the South Korean plane with the aim to test the capabilities of the Soviet air defence system. We believe that that was not the only aim. Both planes acted concertedly. Their flights were performed so as to complicate the air situation and to confuse our air defence systems. In addition, the RC-135 must have been controlling the initial stage of the flight of the Boeing 747 and keeping track of the actions of our air defence at that time (English translation from Soviet News, no. 6190).

During the period of the propaganda war analysed below, these were the 'facts' as both sides presented them. In the United States version the Korean airliner had been an

innocent straggler: the Soviet authorities had known precisely what they were doing when they shot it down in an act of cold-blooded 'murder'. The Soviet government continued to insist that an 'unprecedented accident' had occurred. In this account responsibility lay with the United States intelligence services and ultimately, with the US government itself.

When the Korean airliner crisis had disappeared from the headlines and the war of words was no longer news the arguments continued between commentators and analysts. As time passed the Soviet version began to win support in the West. On September 20th, 1983, an article was published in Pravda which gave details of a more elaborate intelligence operation than had previously been alleged. The author of the article, Marshal Pyotr Kirsonov, stated that:

It has been established beyond any doubt that the Boeing 747 had taken off from Anchorage in Alaska 40 minutes behind the regular schedule. The airline representative explained the delay by 'the need for an additional checking of the onboard equipment', although no malfunctions had been found. But another thing has now come to light. The delay was needed in order to strictly synchronise in time the plane's approach to the coasts of Kamchatka and Sakhalin with the flight of the American intelligence satellite Ferret-D.

The article alleged that the times of the satellite's passing over Soviet territory coincided exactly with the Korean airliner's two separate entrances into Soviet airspace:

The Ferret appeared at 20 hours 24 minutes over the Soviet Union, ie precisely at the moment of the intrusion of the trespasser plane into Soviet airspace... It was natural that the violation of the air border had forced a doubling of the intensiveness of the

work of our radio and radiotechnical systems, which was what the organisers of the provocative flight had counted on in their plan. All this was being registered by the Ferret spy satellite.

The next orbit of the Ferret satellite coincided with absolute accuracy with the Boeing 747's flight over Sakhalin. No fortuity can be invoked to explain such an accurate and repeated coincidence. It is without doubt that the moment of penetration by the intruder plane had been carefully planned in advance so as to assure the gathering of maximum information by the US Ferret intelligence satellite.

This expanded version of the spyplane theory received support in an article in the British publication Defence Attache. 'P.Q.Mann', a pseudonym for an anonymous, but reportedly authoritative defence analyst, agreed with the detailed timings of the Pravda article and on the alleged role played by the RC-135 aircraft. The article introduced new speculation about a possible role in the operation by the US space shuttle Challenger. Andrew Wilson, defence correspondent of the Observer, reported on June 17th, 1984 that the article:

claims to offer new evidence that the civil jet was steered deliberately into Soviet airspace in order to provoke radar and electronic signals that were picked up by a simultaneously orbiting Ferret spy satellite and the space shuttle Challenger. The Russians themselves drew attention to the Ferret's orbiting pattern at the time, but the magazine goes much further. It says the coincident flight of KAL 007 with a US aircraft of similar profile - an RC-135 - within range of Soviet radars less than half an hour before was 'a dummy selling tactic, creating the possibility that a military aircraft was flying in to cross the borders of the Soviet Union.

Alain Jacob, discussing P.Q. Mann's theory in The Guardian Weekly of September 23rd, 1984, noted that "the space shuttle Challenger, which was fired from Cape Canaveral on August 30th, 1983 made three sweeps over the far eastern part of the USSR during and after 007's flight over Kamchatka, the Sea of

Okhotsk, and Sakhalin Island".

If the launch had not been held up for 17 minutes on account of bad weather, the sweeps would have coincided even more closely with the various stages of the flight.

The basic facts around which this precise and detailed theory was constructed were never at any stage refuted by the United States government. Other facts emerged.

Boeing 747's are equipped with the Inertial Navigation System. This 'all-but infallible' system, as Murray Sayle described it in The Sunday Times of May 27th, 1984, operates by means of three independently functioning computers, which are routinely checked and cross-checked. How then had the aircraft strayed off course by more than 300 miles? This question was never resolved. Human error was also considered, and seemed a more likely explanation, although this implied that a major and basic error had been compounded by all three members of the crew, two of whom were experienced military pilots. The captain's reputation for attention to safety and detail when flying earned him the nickname 'Mr Computer'.

Two of the pilots, including the captain, were known to have had links with the CIA. KAL 007 had carried 18 extra crew members (29 instead of the usual 11) who were not named in the official list of those lost. The Soviet Union alleged that these had been military personell involved in the intelligence mission. Passengers on previous KAL 007 flights reported that they had been ordered to close their curtains and dim lights for long periods of their journey, strengthening the possibility that the Korean airliner could

have been, as the Soviets alleged, flying without lights on. In isolation these points were hardly conclusive, but together they detracted from the official US position that the spyplane theory was 'preposterous'. Former director of the CIA Stansfield Turner had revealed on Channel 4 news on September 2nd, 1983 that civilian planes could be and were used on military missions by both the USA and the USSR. R.W. Johnson noted in The Guardian Weekly of December 25th, 1983, that Korean Airlines is closely linked to the Korean CIA, "set up by the CIA in 1982" and that "in 1978 a KAL airliner overflew the great Soviet naval base at Murmansk and was fired on by Soviet fighters"[1]. The spyplane theory was further supported by the fact that, as Andrew Wilson put it in the article cited above, "the Soviet electronic activity provoked by Flight 007's intrusion provided Western intelligence with its biggest coup for many years". Whether planned or not, there was no doubt that US intelligence services had reaped a rich harvest of information about Soviet defences from the Korean airliner incident.

In July 1984 the accumulation of evidence supporting the spy plane theory prompted the TV Eye current affairs programme to produce a special investigation of the disaster. The presenter's opening comments acknowledged that the evidence he was about to present had first been revealed by the Soviet Union. They also indicated this journalist's inclination to dismiss 'the Russians' as a reliable source of information.

Predictably, it was the Russians who first made the charge that Korean Airlines flight 007 was part of a spying mission, but as TV Eye's investigation has

disclosed, that charge can no longer be dismissed simply as propaganda.

The half-hour TV Eye investigation brought together much of the evidence and interviewed several analysts and former military personell. The lawyer representing the relatives of the dead passengers, Aaron Broder, set the context of the investigation by explaining that he and his clients were far from satisfied with the US government's account:

My clients all feel that there has been a cover-up of the real culprits here. My clients feel that there was an intelligence-gathering mission... and that there is a great deal more here than a sheer coincidence that an airliner was 450 miles off course and that it was just by sheer accident over that area of the Russian defence network[2].

Retired US diplomat John Kepple, announcing his intention to call for a special Congressional Hearing which would have access to the US government's classified material on the incident, gave his reasons:

If you look at the mechanics of the flight you cannot believe that it was not intentional... there is some kind of stretching of the mind here because its incredible to use a full airplane full of innocent people who'd paid their money and wanted to go somewhere but I can't personally believe that the flight was not intentional.

Here the presenter interjected with the observation that: "the unthinkable, that lives were deliberately put at risk and lost, is being thought..."

The programme contained detailed interviews with various experts on specific points. Lufthansa pilot Rudolf Braunberg who had flown the KAL 007 route many times testified that in his opinion it was "impossible" for three such experienced

pilots to make an error of such magnitude. Tom Bernard, a former operative on board RC-135s confirmed that it would have been possible for the aircraft in the area on August 31st to have contacted KAL 007 and warned it out of Soviet airspace. He also maintained that it was possible for the RC-135 to report directly to Washington if need be. Ernest Volkman, an American intelligence analyst, outlined the nature of the 'intelligence bonanza' spoken of in the P.Q.Mann article:

the tragic incident managed to turn on just about every single Soviet electro-magnetic transmission over a period of about four hours and an area of approximately 7000 square miles... a Christmas tree lit up, everything you could ever hope for. Now admittedly that's a cynical statement, but we're talking about a cynical business here.

The TV Eye programme added to a growing list of articles and publications which contradicted the picture of the Korean airline disaster initially presented by the US government. By July 1984 the principal points of the Soviet account had been substantiated by numerous independent sources, weakening correspondingly the view that the disaster had been an act of pre-meditated, cold-blooded murder. One year almost to the day after the disaster the official stance of the Reagan Administration itself changed, as The Guardian reported on September 1st, 1984:

A senior Administration official has said that he believes the Russians shot down the Korean airlines flight 007 a year ago because they were genuinely convinced it was on an intelligence mission. The comments by one of the State Department's senior Soviet experts on the Soviet Union went further in publicly acknowledging an honest error by the Soviet Union than the Administration has gone in the past.

One year after the incident a major strand of the Soviet Union's justification for its actions had been conceded by the same authorities who had at first been so adamant in their condemnations: that the aircraft had been confused with an RC-135. Indeed, according to a Newsnight report of September 10th 1986, this fact was known to the US Government in the first week of the crisis.

The item contained an interview with Seymour Hersch, an American journalist and author of a book about the incident. On the programme Hersch stated that "there's agreement inside the [US] intelligence community that the Russians made a wrong ID. It's unanimous". According to the correspondent:

The raw intelligence was available early and persuasively to show that the Russians did not knowingly shoot down a civilian airliner. They did not identify the plane as Korean Airline 747 but confused its track with that of the earlier reconnaissance flight. Within the Pentagon there was one group, Airforce Intelligence, which reported accurately that the Russians did not know they were shooting down an airliner.

Hersch argued that "between day two to day seven of the crisis, we began to get a firm hold on the fact that the Soviets had done nothing other than make a terrible ghastly mistake". "Why then", asked the correspondent, "were these views dicounted?" Why did the Americans insist, "against the best evidence they had, that the Russians had knowingly shot down a civilian airliner?".

By then the Americans were already embarked on a propaganda offensive. To the Administration's ideologues it was the classic case of the evil empire in action.

In Hersch's view, "the Soviet-haters are here at the top of this government, they truly are, and they went public with

the hardest story they could".

During the period of the propaganda war the US government made statements of revulsion and outrage, launching a campaign of denunciation in which it sought to ostracise the Soviet Union from the international community as a 'state based on the dual principles of callousness and mendacity'. President Reagan and his advisers presented the incident as "clear justification of their view of the Soviet Union as an evil empire"(2 Newsnight 8/9/86).

The Administration sought and received backing from its allies in imposing sanctions on cultural and commercial exchanges (though as quickly became clear, relations between the USA and the USSR were already so poor that little could be practically done to make them worse: banning Aeroflot was suggested, for example, until it was pointed out that Aeroflot had no flying rights in the United States). The Soviet Union was unambiguously condemned by the European Parliament, NATO, and professional bodies such as the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations.

The US government's main objective during the crisis was to portray the incident as being entirely consistent with Soviet behaviour. The Korean airline incident was not perceived in this account as an extraordinary incident, but one wholly consistent with normal Soviet behaviour. Such a 'heinous act of barbarism', as President Reagan described it on September 2nd, was a measure of Soviet brutality, a graphic manifestation of the Soviet Threat.

According to this view the lessons to be learned from the Korean airline disaster were clear. As Senator Robert Byrd put it, on BBC news of September 4th:

I would hope that our West European friends would take very close note of this. If they are willing to shoot down an unarmed commercial plane they're certainly willing to shoot down an unarmed European city, one that can't respond.

The linkage drawn between the incident and the nuclear debate in America was not lost on the pro-nuclear lobby in Britain. A Times editorial of September 6th noted that:

This callous regime, which shoots first and asks questions afterwards, has served a timely reminder on the members of the Atlantic Alliance that if they do not hang together they may be hanged separately.

The 'timeliness' of the Korean airliner crisis lay in the scheduled arrival of new American nuclear missiles in Europe by December that year, a controversial deployment which was creating serious political problems for NATO. Western governments used the Korean airline disaster to legitimise the new deployments and to justify their 'tough' negotiating stance at the INF talks in Geneva.

The likelihood that Western negotiators would take a tougher stand at the INF talks, because of the incident, was noted in an ITN report:

As the two sides met for the first time for two months the atmosphere didn't seem to have worsened. But inside there was little doubt that the actual talks will be even more difficult.(3 2200 6/9/83)

The reason for this was said to be that:

The Americans can hardly make any fresh concessions now.

On September 12th the US Congress reconvened in its first session after the Korean airliner incident. ITN reported that:

As a result of the Korean airline incident Congress is now more likely to approve President Reagan's planned increase in defence spending, including the deployment of the controversial MX missile.(3 2200 12/9/83)

The very real effects of the Korean airliner incident on East-West relations and on the arms control process were thus shown to be an escalation of the United States' rearmament programme, unfettered by the need to "make fresh concessions now".

The Soviets also linked the incident to the coming of Cruise and Pershing II, and the ongoing INF negotiations at Geneva. In the Soviet view the incident was deliberately being exploited in order to discredit the Soviet negotiating position at the Geneva talks. The Soviets went further and suggested that lives had knowingly been put at risk on the Korean airliner with the propaganda potential of the incident in mind. The USSR was "contemptuous of American hypocrisy, insisting that the 747 was on a spying mission and had deliberately strayed off course"(2 Newsnight 8/9/86). A Soviet government statement of September 6th, reproduced in Soviet News no. 6189, claimed that:

The plan was to carry out without hitch the intelligence operation but if it was foiled, to turn all this into a major political provocation against the Soviet Union. This conclusion is confirmed by all subsequent actions of the US Administration. Its leaders, including the US President in person, launched a malicious and hostile anti-Soviet campaign over a very short time, clearly using a pre-arranged script. Its essence has been

revealed in its concentrated form in the televised speech of the US President Ronald Reagan on September 5th - to try and blacken the image of the Soviet Union and discredit its social system, to provoke a feeling of hatred towards the Soviet people, to present the aims of the foreign policy of the USSR in a distorted perspective, and to detract attention from its peace initiatives.

Before discussing the way in which television news reported this "battle of words" it is important to draw attention to the different approaches of the two countries to information and 'propaganda'. A significant factor in determining how the Americans on the one hand, and the Soviets on the other were presented on television news was the inability or refusal of the latter to present its case with the same sensitivity to Western public opinion as the Americans. As suggested in the previous chapter, news management and news input have effects on coverage of East-West issues. Coverage of the Korean Airliner tragedy cannot be adequately understood without taking this factor into account.

The United States' view of the Korean airline disaster was immediately communicated to the world, through the mass media, in televised Presidential addresses, news conferences, dramatic presentations of evidence to the United Nations, and a steady flow of commentary which ensured that the US account was highly visible. By contrast the Soviets released only three short TASS statements in the first seven days. The first came on September 1st.

An unidentified plane entered the airspace of the Soviet Union over Kamchatka Peninsula from the direction of the Pacific Ocean and then for the second time violated the airspace of the USSR over Sakhalin Island on the night from August 31st to September 1st. The plane did not

have navigation lights, did not respond to queries and did not enter into contact with the dispatched service. Fighters of the anti-aircraft defence, which were sent aloft towards the intruder plane, tried to give it assistance in directing it to the nearest airfield. But the intruder plane did not react to the signals and warnings from the Soviet fighters and continued its flight in the direction of the Sea of Japan.

Given the scale of human tragedy involved in the disaster this statement was simply inadequate. It said nothing about casualties and failed to confirm that Soviet fighters had shot the aircraft down. These omissions left a gap in Soviet propaganda. Although the next statement, on September 2nd, saw the first exposition of a consistent, credible and increasingly detailed Soviet view, the damage was done in so far as a framework for understanding the incident as 'Soviet brutality' had already been established in the media. Peter Ruff was the BBC correspondent in Moscow at the time of the crisis.

The Korean airliner threw the whole Soviet propaganda/military machine into total chaos. For several days they didn't know what to say. They had no idea. First of all, they wouldn't admit that it had happened, and then it all came out in bits and pieces.

Some Western analysts who later accepted that the incident itself was explicable without recourse to the concept of Soviet barbarism were nevertheless highly critical of what they interpreted as confusion and indecision on the part of the Soviet authorities in the ensuing propaganda war. One such was Geoffrey Stern, who argued on BBC's Newsnight of February 2nd, 1984, that:

It's quite conceivable that any government would have shot down an alien intruder that flies over the most sensitive of all your equipment you have. After all, this whole region contains three extremely sensitive

happened, there being no communication between the United States and the Soviet Union the plane would have been shot down. The Israelis shot down a civilian plane when they thought that it constituted a danger to their vital interests. However, I think that the way it was handled after that betrays the way in which things were going in the Kremlin at the moment. They could have been handled in a very different way.

On the same programme, Dr Dimitri Simes of the Carnegie Institute in Washington stated that:

The Korean airliner was shot because of standard operational procedures. The Soviets honestly were confused, they thought that this was an American spyplane but their air defence system did not function well, they did not have much time before the Korean airliner left Soviet airspace. Where I believe the Soviets could handle it differently was not before shooting the plane but after. They performed miserably. It looked like nobody was in control, one man did not know what the other was saying, and if Mr Andropov was in better health I assume that the Soviets could put together a more credible show.

In the first few days of intense media coverage there were no direct statements or appearances by Soviet leaders. It was not until the TASS statement of September 6th that the destruction of the airliner was officially confirmed. Things began to improve on September 7th when the Soviet Foreign minister addressed the Madrid Conference on European Security and Cooperation, the first time that a member of the Soviet government had spoken on the incident and on September 9th the Soviet authorities mounted a special news conference for Soviet and Western journalists in which they gave a detailed account of what they claimed had happened to the Korean airliner. In the view of BBC's Peter Ruff:

I think a policy decision was taken at the time that someone was going to have to account for this. I equally believe that someone said, why don't we have a full-blown press conference. The decision was taken that it

would have to be the military so you suddenly had Ogarkov appearing coast-to-coast live on television. And in their terms it was probably judged a success. In a sense, the Soviet state decided to confront the thing head on, which was something they'd never done before. After an initial period of confusion and obvious political infighting, it was decided that they would take on the world and justify what they'd done.

Soviet delay in 'confronting the thing head on' undoubtedly contributed to the way in which television journalists reported the propaganda war. Had the Soviet authorities paid more attention at an early stage to the mechanics of an information war fought on the Western media it is possible that the Soviet version of why the tragedy occurred would have been received differently. On the other hand, it is significant that quantitative media coverage of the incident fell away sharply after the Moscow news conference of September 9th, as it became increasingly likely that the Soviet Union had a credible case to put. As the idea of Soviet 'barbarism' began to lose its legitimacy, western journalists in general seemed to lose interest in the affair.

However, it is the contention of this chapter that the Soviets were putting a case after September 1st. The following analysis shows how it was received, vis a vis the admittedly slicker, but no more 'truthful' account of the Korean Airline disaster offered by the Reagan Administration and its Western allies.

2. The American View.

The first day of the sample period, Friday September 2nd, established the explanatory framework which would dominate coverage during the sample. BBC news dispensed with headlines and led with an excerpt from the statement made by President Reagan in California that day.

Ronald Reagan: What can we think of a regime that so broadly trumpets its vision of peace and global disarmament, and yet so callously and quickly commits a terrorist act to sacrifice the lives of innocent human beings?

Newscaster: President Reagan, condemning the Soviet Union for shooting down the Korean airliner. Tonight Moscow apologised, and changed its version. The fighters did open fire, but the Jumbo was spying. (1 2100 2/9/83)

This introduction was typical of the pattern of privileged access extended to the US Government account of the disaster throughout the sample period. In the section of the speech chosen for transmission the President did not state a fact, or make an announcement, or express an opinion. Rather, he posed a rhetorical question: what can we think of such a regime? His assumption that a terrorist act had been committed and innocent lives sacrificed by the Soviet Union was allowed to set the agenda immediately, while at the same time instructing the audience to make the link between this behaviour and Soviet intentions on arms control. This definition of the event was legitimised thus:

tonight Moscow apologised, and changed its version.

Although the implication of the journalist's comment is that the Soviet Union has conceded responsibility and changed its story neither the statement of September 1st nor that of

the 2nd accepted responsibility for the incident. IIN's main evening bulletin retained headlines:

Mr Andropov regrets the deaths in the Korean airliner.

Mr Reagan says - how can you trust such people?(3 2200 2/9/83).

From the way in which the respective positions of the two sides are set out a framework for understanding the issue is established which shares the basic assumptions inherent in the President's statement. No indication is given to the viewer that assumptions are being made, or what these are. By the nature of introductory presentations it is difficult to portray the complexity of the issue, but in the lengthier reports which followed on both bulletins the same assumptions were present. The President's interpretation of the Korean airline disaster set the terms of the propaganda war from the outset of the crisis, quickly becoming the preferred reading of the incident on television news.

President Reagan's speech on September 2nd was open to varying interpretations. In general terms the assumptions made in it, and its linking of the Korean airliner incident to wider issues of East-West relations, were an obvious extension of his conception of the Soviet threat.

Reagan: In the wake of the barbaric act committed yesterday by the Soviet regime against a commercial jet liner, the United States and many other countries of the world made clear and compelling statements that expressed not only our outrage but also our demand for a truthful accounting of the facts. Our first emotions are anger, disbelief and profound sadness.

While events in Afghanistan and elsewhere have left few illusions about the willingness of the Soviet Union to advance its interests through violence and intimidation all of us had hoped that certain irreducible standards of civilised behaviour nonetheless

people everywhere. The tradition in the civilised world has always been to offer help to mariners and pilots who are lost or in distress on the sea or in the air. Where human life is valued, extraordinary efforts are extended to preserve and protect it, and it is essential that as civilised societies we ask searching questions about the nature of regimes where such standards do not apply.

Beyond these emotions the world notes the stark contrast that exists between Soviet words and deeds. What can we think of a regime that so broadly trumpets its vision of peace and global disarmament and yet so callously and quickly commits a terrorist act to sacrifice the lives of human beings? What can be said about Soviet credibility when they so flagrantly lie about such a heinous act? What can be the scope of legitimate mutual discourse with a state whose values permit such atrocities? And what are we to make of a regime which establishes one set of standards for itself, and another for the rest of humankind?

We've joined in the call for an urgent Security Council meeting today. The brutality of this act should not be compounded through silence or the cynical distortion of the evidence now at hand. Tonight I will be meeting with my advisers to conduct a formal review of this matter, and this weekend I shall be meeting with the Congressional leadership. To the families of all those on the ill-fated aircraft we send our deepest sympathies and I hope they know our prayers are with them all.(1 2100 2/9/83)

As is clear, the speech does not focus on the airliner incident itself, but concentrates on drawing out appropriate lessons. The language of the speech - 'flagrant liars', 'barbarism', 'atrocities' - seeks to expose the Soviet Union as a regime with whom there can be no 'legitimate mutual discourse', whose arms control proposals are by implication bogus, which is capable of horrendous acts of violence. It is taken for granted not only that an act of barbarism has been committed but that this is a normal expression of Soviet values. These claims had ideological roots in the conservatism of the Reagan Administration, yet correspondents on television news at no point challenged them and indeed reinforced them by their own commentaries.

... portrayed the President as a defender of the free world against the Soviet Threat, whenever and wherever it occurred:

When the Soviets act in a way which angers the Western world, as in Poland or Afghanistan, that world turns to the United States to carry the banner of protest, and it is precisely to discuss the options open to him that the President is returning to the White House.(3 2200 2/9/83)

Having informed the viewer that a) the West is angry with the Soviet Union, b) the Korean airliner incident is just like Poland and Afghanistan, the reporter concludes that c) the United States carries the 'banner of protest' for us all. The first of these assertions could be described as a fact. The others express only the opinion of the journalist that President Reagan had in this case both right and might on his side. Subsequent discussions of options open to the President underlined the extent to which the US account of the incident had already been established as the 'consensus'. ITN's report ended with speculation on the dilemma facing the President. How could he make them pay?

Whatever sanctions President Reagan takes against the Soviet Union, sooner or later he will have to lift them, and the Soviet slate will in a sense be wiped clean and so the President is certain to ensure that the memory of what the Soviet Union has done lives long beyond whatever action he takes against them.

By this stage in the bulletin no evidence of any kind had been presented to confirm or deny what precisely it was that the Soviets had done. Journalists nevertheless assumed that the Soviet Union was capable of and had in fact deliberately destroyed a civilian airliner. President Reagan's speech was taken as the starting point for an 'impartial' account of the

incident, rather than being seen as itself part of the propaganda war and the 'battle of words' which was developing. The only controversy systematically analysed in subsequent discussion was the question of the severity of sanctions.

BBC news followed its report of President Reagan's speech with a report from the United Nations building in New York where an emergency session of the Security Council was about to begin. In the course of the item one Senator questioned the value of the United Nations, challenging it to respond 'effectively' to this latest instance of Soviet barbarism:

Senator Alphonse D'Amato: It's about time that the free world came together. We've had too much rhetoric, not enough action, we've had condemnations in the past, we've had allies not act in concert. Number one we should convene the world body, the UN, let's see if it is more than a debating society.

The speaker assumes that the Korean airline incident is a matter for 'action' as opposed to 'rhetoric', and states his belief that action against the Soviet Union is long overdue. The correspondent follows on with a commentary on the role of the United Nations which takes on Mr D'Amato's remarks and appears to accept their basic validity:

Journalist: There are many people of course who do regard the United Nations as little more than a debating society. Even if enough delegates voted for a resolution to condemn the Russians the Soviet Union still has a right of veto. It is at best a safety valve, an opportunity to express indignation without getting any really tangible results.

This commentary is informed by a particular reading of the Korean airline disaster, that of right-wingers in the US

government. This account had become the basis of the interpretative framework used by journalists to make sense of the incident, while the question of what actually happened to the airliner and who was responsible was bypassed.

This pattern was evident throughout the sample period. Speakers appeared on the news, presented the US account of the incident as fact and proceeded to condemn the Soviet Union accordingly.

Journalist: American officials insist that the action was not just a simple and terrible mistake.

Assistant Secretary of State Richard Burt: This was certainly not the action of a rogue fighter pilot. We know for a fact that this fighter pilot was in continuous contact with his ground control and that ground control exercised authority over his actions. We have yet to find any convincing evidence that that airliner received any warning from the Soviets.

Journalist: Though Congress is not sitting the toughest demands for retaliatory action of some kind have come from Capitol Hill where there's outrage particularly at the death of Congressman Larry Macdonald, an arch-conservative from Georgia.

Senator Daniel P. Moynihan: First of all the President should call the Congress back into session to let the world and the Soviet Union know how serious this is they have murdered an American Congressman. Two, we should go to the Security Council. Three we should go to the World Court and ask every other country in the world who is signatory to the Chicago Civil Air Convention of which the Soviets are a party to go to the court with us and get damages and a condemnation.(1 2100 2/9/83)

The uncritical reporting of statements which agreed with the dominant interpretation of the crisis became a typical feature of news coverage.

Henry Kissinger: The first thing I would do now is to suspend the meeting between Gromyko and Secretary of State Schultz until there is a satisfactory explanation.

Zbigniew Brzezinski: Thus we mustn't make it into an American-Soviet affair. The United States should join

Even after September 4th, when major gaps in the Administration's evidence began to be noted by such figures as Democratic Congressional leader Jim Wright, challenges to the dominant interpretation of events were limited to two items, both on BBC2's Newsnight, and both written by Charles Wheeler, the BBC's Washington correspondent at that time.

By September 4th it was becoming clear not only that the United States' account was curiously silent on major points - such as the failure of US and Japanese monitoring facilities to warn KAL 007 of impending disaster - but that some of the Soviet assertions were true. BBC1's main news that day reported a claim by Soviet General Romanov that "the Jumbo looked like an American reconnaissance plane, the RC-135. He said the Jumbo was flying without any lights, and the outline resembled that of the RC-135, a military version of the Boeing 707. American officials admitted tonight that there was an American spyplane in the vicinity of the Korean Airlines flight".

Some evidence strengthening the Soviet account emerged from a Presidential briefing session on September 4th. The Democratic Congressional leader Jim Wright, who was present at the briefing, told reporters that from the evidence of the tapes of the incident made by US and Japanese intelligence it was not clear that the Soviet fighter pilot had recognised KAL 007 to be a civilian airliner, contrary to the assurances of the Reagan Administration. In fact, said the congressman,

an RC-135.

On September 5th ITN reported a statement by Congressman Wright that, according to his hearing of the Administration's tapes of the incident "there wasn't any clear definition of the aircraft [by the Soviet pilot]. It was referred to on those tapes as 'it' or 'the plane' or 'the target'. The question arises as to how high was the level of understanding that this was an unarmed commercial civilian airplane"(3 2200 5/9/83).

Main evening bulletins never developed the implications of this statement, which clearly undermined the Administration's position that there was no possibility of a mistake being made. Indeed, main evening bulletins constructed no critical, or sceptical readings of the Administration's account at any time during their coverage. Only one journalist - Charles Wheeler of Newsnight - developed the available evidence and drew conclusions which seriously challenged the US account.

We reproduce at some length here one of Wheeler's report, in which the evidence about the RC-135 was employed to legitimise the Soviet account. Broadcast by Newsnight on September 5th, the item began by pointing out 'undue selectivity' in the American account of the incident.

Journalist: In advance of the President's speech [a reference to the September 6th speech discussed below] what chiefly intrigues people here is how Mr Reagan will handle the accidental disclosure yesterday of a possible pertinent fact that the Administration was keeping to itself, that an American military reconnaissance was flying just outside Soviet airspace but in the same area

airliner they later shot down. In the minds of some this revelation not only reinforces what seems to be shaping up as the Soviet case for the defence - that the Russian fighter pilots mistook the 747 for an American spyplane - it also suggests that Washington is being unduly selective in its presentation of the evidence.

The story of the American reconnaissance plane, an RC-135, surfaced on Sunday morning when half a dozen leaders of both houses of Congress went to the White House for what one of those veterans called 'the most detailed and helpful briefing we've ever had from a President'. Mr Reagan had assembled his senior cabinet members, and the briefing included a playback of tapes recorded by Japanese intelligence of radio reports by two Soviet fighter pilots to their controllers on the ground. Afterwards the Congressional leaders talked to us in the White House garden, among them the Democratic Party leader in the House, Jim Wright.

Jim Wright: We do not know for sure whether or not the Russian pilots were able correctly to identify that it was a commercial, a civilian aircraft as opposed to an RC-135.

US Journalist: But you say they continually referred to it as an RC-135.

Jim Wright: They referred to it twice in those terms. On one occasion they referred to it as an RC-135 or unidentifiable target.

US Journalist: Was there any reason given to you as to why they might have thought it was an RC-135?

Jim Wright: Because of the fact that they have tracked RC-135s which routinely fly outside, just outside their zone, they do not intrude into Russian airspace and they are familiar with the fact that we do maintain reconnaissance flights in our RC-135s which are US reconnaissance aircraft and I suppose also because they tend to be somewhat paranoid.

Journalist: Congressman Wright's disclosure touched off a barrage of questions at a White House briefing within the hour. And eventually a reluctant White House spokesman Larry Speakes conceded that yes, there was evidence that the Russians at one time thought they were tracking an RC-135 and yes, a plane of that type had been flying a mission over Soviet territory. The RC-135 is a military version of the Boeing 707. It has a specially extended nose. It is far smaller than a 747. It does not have that characteristic Jumbo hump and a competent Soviet pilot ought to be able to tell one from the other, especially in the light of a three-quarter moon. But the presence of not one but two unidentified planes, one of them just outside and the other well inside Soviet airspace may well have created confusion and should surely have been disclosed along with all the

other evidence. And the Reagan Administration can't claim that nobody has ever raised the question of American aircraft. They did.

While Congressional leaders were being briefed in the Cabinet Room the man in charge of the crisis management team at the State Department, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Burt, was appearing live on the CBS programme Face the Nation where a chance to fill out the record soon presented itself.

Face the Nation presenter: There have been several stories in the last couple of days quoting intelligence officials some saying that the Soviets may have indeed thought that they were on the track of a spyplane but I take it you say they saw strobelights, what is your view on that, do you think that this is a case of mistaken identity?

Richard Burt: Not at all, I think it's preposterous to think that the Soviets concluded that was a spyplane. We carry out normal military reconnaissance missions in international airspace in that area as do the Soviets and other countries. These operations are sometimes connected with what we call national-technical means of verification. The United States and the Soviet Union have agreed on procedures for monitoring arms control agreements, but the point is, that we do not violate Soviet airspace on such operations and I would remind you that we know that the Soviets tracked this aircraft for two and a half hours as it went in and out of Soviet airspace and before destroying the aircraft the Soviet pilot had established visual contact with the aircraft so it just doesn't wash that this could have been seen by the Soviets as a spyplane or a military aircraft.

Journalist: Nobody here is condoning the shooting down of that Korean aircraft but there is criticism of the way the Reagan Administration has handled the crisis.

The item now leads into an interview with Dimitri Simes, an emigre Soviet academic at the Carnegie Institute, Washington, and consultant to the US Government on Soviet affairs.

Do you regard it as significant that there was an American reconnaissance plane, an RC-135 in the area?

Dimitri Simes: Definitely significant because it adds at least some element of credibility to the first Soviet explanation... it does not look like a flagrant lie as it appeared after the statement was issued and totally rejected by the State Department.

This example illustrates the nature of the questions being asked of the United States' account even at this early stage, and the availability of an alternative account of the incident. The item raises the possibility that the Soviet version is not, after all, a 'flagrant lie'. This alternative framework is arrived at by the simple device of examining the available evidence, including Congressman Wright's testimony that, according to the US tape of the incident, the Soviet fighter pilot who shot down KAL 007 actually referred to an RC-135 on two occasions. On main bulletins the disclosure of the presence in the area of an RC-135 was reported by journalists, in line with American claims, as coincidence.

American officials admitted tonight that there was an American spyplane in the vicinity of the Korean Airlines flight but it was well outside Soviet airspace and one and a half hours before the airliner was shot down. The spyplane was on a routine reconnaissance flight, they say, and by the time the Jumbo was shot down the Soviet pilots should have known without a doubt that it was a civilian plane.(1 2000 4/9/83)

The next day, September 6th, President Reagan gave a major televised statement on the incident which was covered extensively on British television news. By this stage in the propaganda war it was being openly speculated that there would be no "serious sanctions"(ITN 2200 5/9/83). The reasons for this, it was reported, were disagreement amongst the allies as to the effectiveness of sanctions, and the disclosure that in line with the Soviet account there had indeed been an American RC-135 spyplane in the vicinity of the Korean airliner. This had emerged on Sunday September 4th, after a briefing session between President Reagan and Congressional leaders at the White House, and was reported on

Partly for this reason, it was predicted that there would be a drawing back from the "tough line against the Russians". Reports of the speech portrayed it as moderate. "A mild speech", one journalist called it (ITN 2200 6/9/83). "President Reagan failed to apply any strong sanctions", remarked another on the same bulletin, "and the White House today received scores of telegrams protesting at the lack of real action". BBC reported the President's own description of his sanctions as "a calm and measured response"(BBC1 2100 6/9/83). The same section of the speech was transmitted on both main evening bulletins.

Reagan: Here is a brief segment of the tape which we're going to play in its entirety at the United Nations security council tomorrow - (The navigation lights are on...Roger I'm at 7500 course 230, closing on the target... I have executed the launch, target is destroyed, breaking off attack). Those were the voices of the Soviet pilots. In this tape the pilot who fired the missiles describes his search for what he calls the target. He reports he has it in sight, indeed he pulls up to within about a mile of the Korean plane, he mentions its flashing strobe light and that its navigation lights are on. He then reports he's reducing speed to get behind the airliner, gives his distance from the plane at various points in this manoeuvre, and finally announces what can only be called the Korean Airline Massacre.

Alternatives to the view that the speech was a "calm and measured response" were not reported on main evening bulletins. Again, however, Charles Wheeler on Newsnight challenged this reading. Appendix 4.1 is a transcript of this counter-example (broadcast on September 6th) in its entirety. Here we reproduce two sections of the journalist's commentary. In the first, the Reagan speech is employed as an

and the journalist uses it to comment on the reasons for his popularity.

The people who still wonder how it was that the actor Ronald Reagan became President of the United States, and for those who wonder if he'll be reelected if next year he runs for a second term, his speech last night provides the answer. America found in Reagan a leader with a simple comprehensible philosophy, and an exceptional ability to put his case across. He was always good at television. Last night he was matchless. Three years in office has made Reagan the master of his role. His popularity and his power have given his actor's talent an edge that wasn't there before. He was helped of course by the nature of the issue. A civil airliner packed with innocent people sent to their deaths by a Soviet missile. A simple case, he said, not merely of murder. As though it were a feature film he gave the tragedy a title - the Korean Airline Massacre, and he called it that five times.

After a lengthy excerpt from the President's speech, the journalist comes back in to contextualise it, not as a calm and measured response, but as 'demagogery'.

President Reagan addressing the nation. Reactions here vary widely. From the left to the political centre there is clearly relief that the actions the President has called for are strictly limited. 'The White House avoids flamboyance' says the New York Times, and from CBS, 'the speech of a statesman'. At the other end of the political spectrum, the far Right, it is being called a 'namby-pamby speech that won't wash with the American people because it is too soft' and that has been the reaction clearly anticipated by the President's aides. At a White House briefing they stressed that the restraint he showed does not mean any softening in his attitude to the Russians, and in private conversations duly put into print today they added that the appearance of restraint was crucial to Mr Reagan for foreign and political reasons. Well restraint it seems is in the eye of the beholder. Perhaps it can be said that in this observer's view Mr Reagan came closer last night than John Kennedy, or Lyndon Johnson, or Richard Nixon ever did, to being a demagogue.

In this example the Reagan Administration's viewpoint is reported as 'propaganda'. The President is not presented here

as a moderate and sensible statesman making a calm and measured response to grave provocation, but as an 'actor', a 'demagogue', complimented on his ability to manipulate emotions with 'simple, comprehensible philosophies'. This reading of the speech, or of the official US viewpoint throughout the crisis, was never echoed on main evening bulletins.

It was not only the Reagan Administration which publicly professed its outrage at Soviet 'terrorism'. The majority of NATO governments joined in the condemnations. They too received uncritical coverage. The British Foreign Secretary for example, remarked on September 2nd that:

the world is bound to reflect on what kind of government and what kind of society it is that allows this kind of thing to happen.(BBC1 2100 2/9/83)

Echoing closely the sentiments expressed earlier in the day by President Reagan, the central assumption was again one of Soviet barbarism. The journalist reported the statement as moderate and conciliatory, under the circumstances:

But in spite of all this condemnation it's been noticeable today that noone in power has actually suggested cutting off any links with the Russians. Quite the opposite, in fact. Sir Geoffrey, like the State Department in Washington, is saying that the real need is to keep on talking to the Russians, to persuade them that they shouldn't behave like this.

The Administration's account of the incident had been established as reasonable and consensual, although no such assumption could have been made on the evidence alone.

At the end of the sample period the British Defence Secretary visited Washington. As the Foreign Secretary had

done, Michael Heseltine used the Korean airline incident to portray himself as moderate and conciliatory in the context of the Soviet threat. These elements were neatly merged in his support for a policy of "negotiating from strength"(ITN 2200 14/9/83). Mr Heseltine's visit to Washington was closely linked to the impending arrival of cruise missiles in Britain, and his statements during the visit illustrate how Western politicians frequently used the Korean airline disaster to justify and legitimate their defence policies in terms of the Soviet Threat. Of particular interest here is the extent to which this use of the tragedy was reported by television news.

Mr Heseltine has told the Americans that the shooting down of the Korean plane reinforced the need for the West to pursue arms control talks. The incident, he said, said nothing new about Russian behaviour but because the Soviet Union was capable of such acts it was imperative to go on talking to them about nuclear weapons.(1 2100 14/9/83)

The opinion that there was 'nothing new' in the Korean airline disaster appeared without qualification or comment, as it did in ITN's report:

the Defence Secretary Mr Heseltine has said the Korean jet incident has made arms talks with Russia even more important. He said in Washington the West must still look for a dialogue simply because the Soviets are capable of doing such things, and he warned against a rhetoric of confrontation.(3 2200 14/9/83)

This was followed with news of more criticism of the USSR from President Reagan: "but President Reagan kept up his fierce criticism of Moscow tonight. He said we cannot allow such a brutal regime to militarily dominate this planet".

regime out to militarily dominate this planet': they frequently reinforced those images by sharing the assumption on which such rhetoric was based. This was borne out on one of the few occasions when a view which dissented from the dominant interpretation (other than those from Soviet sources) was reported.

On the 12th of September a summit meeting of the foreign ministers of the European Economic Community was held in Athens, under the chairmanship of the Greek Foreign Minister. An attempt was made at the meeting to secure a resounding condemnation of the Soviet Union for shooting down the Korean airliner. The Greeks however, disagreed with this approach. ITN reported that:

Nine of the Common Market countries are angry with the tenth, Greece, for blocking a united condemnation of the Soviet Union. The community foreign ministers could only agree to issue a statement simply regretting the loss of life.(3 2200 12/9/83)

The language of the report - they could 'only' issue a statement, 'simply' regretting the loss of life - reveals the underlying assumption that more should have been said. As the report continues it becomes clear that Greece is held responsible for "a weak compromise cobbled together" which "merely expressed deep emotion and agreed to a full investigation". There is no obvious reason why expressions of regret and calls for a full investigation should be dismissed as a 'weak compromise', unless the assumption had already been made that no investigation was required. The BBC report took a similarly dim view of the Greeks:

The journalist's description of the foreign ministers' statement was remarkably similar to that of the ITN report.

Eventually there was a bland, compromise statement expressing sympathy for the victims of the disaster, but the Greek foreign minister was still the most unpopular man at his own meeting and the statement did not condemn the Russians.

In so far as the statement failed to condemn 'the Russians' it was a "bland compromise". In neither bulletin was any attempt made to view the "bland compromise" position from the Greek perspective, and to explain why the Greeks felt it to be valid. The viewer however, was reminded that Greece had a "left-wing government". The story was followed up three days later when the European Parliament met in Strasbourg. There was no 'weak, bland compromise' here, as BBC reported:

Brutal and despicable. That was how the European Parliament condemned the shooting down of the South Korean airliner when it met in Strasbourg today. In its resolution the Parliament spoke of its deep indignation at the incident calling it cold-blooded murder, assassination and execution, but it wasn't only the Russians who came in for criticism. The Greek government was censured for refusing earlier this week to agree to an outright condemnation of the Soviet attack.(1 2100 14/9/83).

With its accusations of cold-blooded murder, assassination and execution, this statement received a distinctly more sympathetic response than had the earlier 'compromise'. It was quickly endorsed by the correspondent as redressing the perceived inadequacies of the Athens statement.

It's taken fourteen days for Europe to pull together. It's collective act. Fourteen days before it bypassed its own bureaucracy and condemned Russia's attack. This was the day the sleeping Parliament in Strasbourg woke up, with Greece in its sights.

While congratulating the Parliament for at last pulling together, we were offered a belated and brief account of why the Greek representatives had behaved in the way that they did:

The Greeks said their stand had been prompted by a need to preserve detente and not risk peace, but that argument was rejected by others who voted to condemn Russia by name.

In this manner, those who challenged the official reading of the Korean airline disaster were implicitly censured by journalists. On the opening day of the 1983 TUC conference in Blackpool BBC reported that the General Council had passed an emergency motion condemning the Soviet Union. This was followed by the news that:

Tonight Tony Benn in a wide-ranging speech attacking the West said the truth hadn't come out in the first instance, that there was a reconnaissance plane accompanying the Korean airliner over Soviet territory.(1 2100 5/9/83)

Mr Benn's statement that the Reagan Administration had been withholding important information from the public was contextualised by the qualification that he was 'attacking the West'. This hardly seems relevant to the subject of the Korean airliner unless to connect in the eyes of the audience Mr Benn's views on the subject to an 'anti-West' position.

THE SOVIET VIEW

Coverage of the American view is also the key to how Soviet propaganda in the crisis was reported. As Table 1 indicates Soviet accounts of the circumstances surrounding the incident were not ignored (30 reported statements of the Soviet position in all), but they were consistently reported within a framework which interpreted the spyplane theory as a 'cover-up' rather than a credible explanation.

Soviet statements were reported on television news on five days throughout the sample. Two of these were TASS statements, one was delivered by the Soviet Foreign Minister at the Madrid Security Conference, one by a commentator on Soviet television news, and one was presented at a news conference in Moscow given for foreign and Soviet journalists. The assumption of Soviet culpability structured coverage throughout. The first reported Soviet statement was the TASS release of September 2nd:

Half an hour after President Reagan had spoken the Russians admitted for the first time that their fighters had opened fire but only, they said, with warning shots. Most significantly though the TASS statement said they were authorised to express the regret of what they called the Soviet Union's leading circles... But all day leaders in non-communist capitals throughout the world have been telling Soviet diplomats that their version of events is inadequate.(1 2100 2/9/83)

Good evening. The Soviet Union says it did fire what it calls 'warning tracer shots' at the South Korean airliner. Moscow television said it was 'authorised to state that the leading circles of the Soviet Union expressed their regret about the victims'. It's thought that means President Andropov. But Moscow still claims the plane was masquerading as a civil aircraft. President Reagan in California said the Soviets had flagrantly lied about the plane.(ITN 2200 2/9/83)

As the propaganda war developed Soviet statements were

responsibility for the civilian deaths was blamed by the USSR throughout on the United States. At the same time, the main case for the Soviet defence, that the aircraft had been mistaken for a spyplane was routinely juxtaposed with 'balancing' statements by representatives of Western governments. Statements from these sources were not subject to critical analysis or challenge by journalists, and when used to 'balance' the debate they tended to be juxtaposed as 'truth' to Soviet 'propaganda'.

As we saw the initial statement made by President Reagan received uncritical coverage. The speech set the tone and established the interpretative framework which dominated subsequent coverage. Soviet statements reported at this time were immediately contradicted by reference to the Reagan speech and by the opinions of privileged 'others'. BBC's statement that 'non-communist leaders say the Soviet version is inadequate' was followed by a lengthy list of condemnations:

The Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe summoned the Soviet ambassador to the Foreign Office and told him of Britain's horror and revulsion. Other nations West and East have spoken too. France called the incident 'cruel and intolerable'. West Germany, 'despicable, brutal and unparalleled'. Italy called it a 'mad gesture of war'. China said she was shocked. So too did the Pope.

ITN balanced the Soviet statement with President Reagan's accusation of 'flagrant lying'. Then:

America insists that a Soviet fighter shot the plane down, killing the 269 people on board.

As noted in the introduction, Soviet statements initially

failed to confirm the fact that the aircraft had been destroyed by a Soviet fighter. But the September 2nd statement, expressing 'regret' over the loss of life and condemning those who 'allowed' it was not a denial of that fact. In the above report of the propaganda exchange it is implied that such a denial has taken place. The Soviets are implied to be covering up, while the US State Department and President Reagan is staunchly insisting on the 'truth'. The debate at this point was not about whether the aircraft had been shot down or not, but why. Was it the consequence of a typical act of Soviet brutality or the accidental byproduct of a US intelligence operation? The statements released by both sides on September 2nd made this clear. On television news the debate was shifted onto different terrain, away from the doubts surrounding the American account of the incident.

The TASS statement was also interpreted by journalists as a 'coming clean' or a movement 'in the direction demanded by Western governments', although it was a clear condemnation, both of the United States for causing the tragedy, and Western leaders in general for exploiting it. That the statement did not contain an admission of responsibility for the deaths was clear from news' accounts, and explained by one journalist as being due to the fact that 'the Soviet Union never apologises'.

The Foreign Secretary summoned the Soviet ambassador, told him the earlier Soviet explanation was totally inadequate and presented him with a list of demands...

Tonight the Russians have moved a little of the way in the direction Sir Geoffrey and the Americans are demanding. It came like this on Moscow Radio's account of the affair, broadcast in English and it was brief in the extreme.[Radio Moscow broadcast follows]

the leading circles that are expressing their regret can only be the political leadership in the Kremlin, headed by President Andropov. It's a less than half acceptance of responsibility and a less than half apology, but in the usual way the Soviet Union never apologises for what it does and is even less willing to admit it was wrong than most Western countries are and that brief sentence dropped into an elaborate defence of what happened must represent the minimum of what Mr Andropov and his colleagues feel that the West will accept.(1 2100 2/9/83)

Coverage of the September 2nd TASS statement illustrated a number of contradictory themes. On the one hand, the Soviets were reported to be coming clean in response to Western condemnation; on the other that they were engaged in a cover-up to deny the obvious fact that they had shot down a civilian airliner; the Soviet exposition of the spy plane theory was contextualised as part of this cover-up, and discredited accordingly.

These contradictions continued to appear in coverage. On September 5th British television news picked up on a Soviet television commentator's remarks about the incident, which were almost as vitriolic in their attack on the United States as Mr Reagan's comments about the Soviet Union had been. BBC's report began by pointing to some 'movement' in the Soviet position.

Tonight the Russians came the closest they've come yet to admitting responsibility. A Soviet commentator said on television their defence forces had fulfilled their duty in protecting the country's security. But there was no apology from Moscow tonight. The television commentator accused the Americans of being 'worse than the Nazis, sacrificing lives for their own ends'.(1 2100 5/9/83).

On Soviet television's main news tonight the commentator said the incident was all part of an American plan to gain nuclear superiority in Europe. He said the innocent passengers on the plane had been sacrificed just as Hitler's troops forced women and children to go in front

admitting that Soviet fighters shot down the plane(3
2200 5/9/83)

To say that one has 'fulfilled one's duty' is not the same thing as admitting responsibility. A major TASS statement was released the next day which expanded further on the statement of September 2nd and referred directly to the RC-135 spyplane. The statement also contained the first official reference to the destruction of the airliner by Soviet fighters and was interpreted by journalists as the admission of guilt 'everyone has been waiting for'.

Good evening. Six days after the destruction of the Korean airliner the Soviet Government have finally owned up...That admission came less than 24 hours after President Reagan had gone on television to appeal for international action against the Soviet Union.

This statement, carrying with it the full authority of the Soviet leadership is an admission that a Soviet interceptor brought down the Jumbo jet. Coming as it does with the full authority of the Kremlin this is the acknowledgment that everyone has been waiting for.(1
2100 6/9/83)

ITN interpreted the statement as a response to President Reagan's 'mild speech' of the previous evening. Again, ITN avoided the basic issue of why the airliner had been shot down and like BBC concentrated on reading the Soviet statement as an admission of guilt.

Good evening. The Soviet Union admitted tonight for the first time that it did shoot down the Korean airliner last week, and it came near to saying it was sorry.(3
2200 6/9/83).

Balance was achieved by juxtaposing the Soviet claim with a straight denial by the United States government:

The statement, expressly by the Soviet government, was rejected by the American Embassy in Moscow as

inadequate, too little, too late but in saying the airliner's flight had been terminated by the Soviet air defences, President Andropov may have reasserted his civilian control over the Soviet military who've been insisting they did nothing wrong. Mr Andropov was away on holiday when the airliner was brought down. He may also have responded to Mr Reagan's mild speech last night which called for little more than a Soviet apology and compensation for the victims.(3 2200 6/9/83)

Later in the bulletin we are told:

White House officials are still studying the reports from Moscow but a spokesman said, 'if it's true, it will be about time too'. It'll certainly be welcome news for President Reagan who throughout has tried to avert a full scale confrontation with Moscow in the hopes that the arms control negotiations with the Russians would not come to a grinding halt.

The implications of these comments are clear. The Soviet Union, having confessed its guilt, will have pleased President Reagan who has never sought a confrontation over the incident. At the same time, it is 'too little, too late'. The presentation of the statements and opinions of the principal actors in the drama is principally determined by the assumption that one side is guilty of the accusations being made against it by the other side. The United States appears in the account as flexible, anxious to avoid conflict, prepared to forgive the crime which has been committed. President Reagan is portrayed as 'trying to avert a full scale conflict' rather than as the Cold War ideologue which some felt the Korean airliner incident confirmed him to be. Soviet 'guilt' was read into a succession of statements which claimed the opposite.

Television news covered subsequent Soviet inputs into the propaganda war by concentrating on its alleged refusal to apologise or compensate for the crime. Yet from September 1st

the Soviet Union repeatedly stressed its 'regret' for the deaths of innocent people in the disaster, while refusing to accept responsibility. The distinction between these positions was not reflected in coverage.

On September 8th the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko attended the Madrid Security Conference on Security and Cooperation. In the course of his speech to the conference he reiterated the Soviet position and stressed that "we have expressed regret over the loss of human lives" (English text from Soviet News, no.6190). Journalists disagreed.

Mr Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, showed no remorse. On the contrary when he spoke at the European Security Conference in Madrid he accused the United States of sending the plane across Soviet territory on a spying mission.(1 2100 7/9/83)

In his speech Mr Gromyko offered not a hint of regret or apology.(3 2200 7/9/83)

Mr Gromyko did express his government's regret, while blaming the tragedy on the actions of the United States intelligence services. The journalist excluded this from the account and contradicted Gromyko's accusations with statements by the British Foreign Secretary and the US Secretary of State.

Sir Geoffrey Howe told him 'your explanation is still not credible'.(1 2100 7/9/83)

Journalist: Mr Schultz reacted angrily to what he'd heard.

George Schultz: I would have to say that from the very beginning we have heard nothing but falsehoods from the Soviet Union, and it is disappointing for me to sit in that hall at a conference that is dedicated to human rights, to truth, and hear the Foreign Minister of the

It had become clear by this time that several aspects of the Soviet position were not 'falsehoods'. As we have seen, as early as September 4th the possibility that the Korean airliner had been mistaken for a US RC-135 spyplane had been made available as an explanation for the incident. If, as Seymour Hersch argued above, the US Administration already knew beyond doubt by September 9th that this explanation was the correct one, it is clear that the public in general (and television news journalists) did not. Only the possibility had been established. However, this might have been viewed as enough to justify qualification or even criticism of the dismissive statements of Western leaders about Soviet claims. With the exceptions of the counter-examples noted above, there were none. The assumed incredibility of Soviet claims appeared to render unnecessary their serious examination. The apparent consensus which had been established around the theme of Soviet barbarism meant that those who alleged it to be true did not have to substantiate their claims.

A notable feature of the propaganda war was the relative dearth of evidence produced by the US government in support of its account. The only piece of hard evidence used was the tape-recorded conversation between Soviet pilots and ground control. These tapes however, proved only that the airliner had been attacked and destroyed by the Soviet fighters. They did not prove the main thrust of the US position, that a deliberate act of murder had taken place. If anything, as Congressman Wright had observed, they lent support to the

US account remained the favoured one on television news. Journalists showed zeal in reporting anything which appeared to confirm the 'cold-blooded murder' scenario. As balance to the Gromyko speech on September 7th, ITN reported that:

The White House said it had further, almost irrefutable evidence that the Soviet authorities knew the airliner was an unarmed civilian plane. The White House claims that it has further information which proves that the Russians knew full well that they were about to shoot down a civilian airliner. It's believed this evidence is contained in a series of yet to be released tape recordings of conversations between the Soviet jet fighters and their controller on the ground.(3 2200 7/9/83)

Such evidence would, of course, have fundamentally weakened the Soviet position on the incident. However, as the correspondent went on to reveal in the next sentence, there was no new information available.

But tonight President Reagan's spokesman denied the report. One possible reason is that it's a highly delicate issue because questions could be asked as to whether the Americans were using a spy plane to obtain this evidence.

The most detailed and 'media-conscious' presentation of the Soviet version came on September 9th at a special news conference staged in Moscow. The spy plane theory remained essentially the same as that first expounded on September 2nd, but was further elaborated with diagrams, maps and specific allegations relating to the role played by the RC-135 aircraft.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, this conference can be seen as something of a turning point for the Soviet authorities, both in relation to the Korean

airline tragedy, and to their information policy as a whole. This was reflected in coverage, which emphasised the unusual staginess of the event.

Good evening. The Russians took an unusual step today in their attempts to explain why they shot down the Korean airliner. They rarely put their generals on display but today one of them was allowed to answer questions from Western journalists.(1 2100 10/9/83)

Then:

But the message was as defiant as ever.

ITN reported that:

The press conference lasting two hours is thought to have been unprecedented in the Soviet Union, both in allowing journalists to ask real questions and in the seniority of the Soviet spokesmen answering them.(3 2200 10/9/83)

This was followed by the news that:

They were unrepentant.

The elaborate Soviet account of the flight of the Korean airliner, its deviation and rendezvous with an RC-135, the extent of its course deviation and the sensitivity of the military areas over which it flew, were dismissed by reference to a throwaway comment from a United States' source:

The United States remains unimpressed. Where's the evidence, they're asking tonight? The Soviet Union still owes the world answers.(1 2100 10/9/83)

Despite the confident tone of these comments, the United States had as yet produced no evidence for its own version of

events. Neither the USA nor the USSR had proven the accuracy of their respective accounts. The United States denial of the Soviet account, entirely predictable within the context of a fierce propaganda war was favoured nonetheless by the space given it in the bulletin to balance and discredit the Soviet version. No comparable emphasis was ever put on the opposite situation:

'The Soviet Union remains unimpressed. Where's the evidence, they're asking tonight? The United States still owes the world answers'.

Such an aggressive presentation, as inconceivable as it seems in the Soviet case, was routine for coverage of US statements.

Journalist: It was left to a State Department official to contemptuously dismiss today's Soviet version of what happened.

US State Department official: The Soviet Union still owes the world answers and assurances that civil aviation will not be targeted in the future. It is interesting to note what the Soviets did not do today. They offered no evidence to support their assertion that the plane was on a reconnaissance mission. They offered no evidence to support the claim that they attempted to identify or force down the KAL plane.(1 2100 10/9/83)

ITN reported that:

at the State Department officials were discounting the latest claims from Moscow charging that the Russians were engaged in a cover-up.(3 2200 10/9/83)

Reports painted a picture of a 'defiant message' 'contemptuously dismissed' as a 'cover-up'. One journalist returned to the theme of the Soviets 'coming clean'. To most observers it was by now clear that the Soviets were not going to admit responsibility for the disaster, or accept Mr

nevertheless chose to give exactly the opposite impression:

It's taken the Russians nine days to agree with the outline of events originally presented by America.(3 2200 10/9/83)

As the Moscow news conference was going on a memorial service for the victims of the incident was taking place in Washington, after which President Reagan made a public appeal for a national day of mourning to be held the following Sunday. The service, in which Soviet barbarism was again emphasised by the Bishop of Washington, served to further contextualise the Moscow news conference. The content of the Bishop of Washington's speech neatly framed reports from Moscow, while in ITN's bulletin they received headline status:

Journalist: Good evening. President Reagan has called on America to observe a national day of mourning for the dead in the Korean airliner. There have only been six days of mourning before: for the Kennedy brother, Martin Luther King, and three former Presidents.(3 2200 9/9/83)

Inside the massive portals of the national cathedral, gathered alongside President Reagan and his wife were a mixture of family mourners, government leaders and foreign diplomats. They heard the Bishop of Washington denounce Russia as an outlaw among nations.

Bishop of Washington: We have searched for some way to explain what has happened. We would like to find some means of justification, some possibility of getting the Soviet Union off the hook, so to speak. We have not been able to do so, nor have they offered any help. There is no way to justify the destruction of helpless innocent people.(1 2100 10/9/83)

Coverage of the Moscow news conference was consistent with the pattern for reporting Soviet statements in the Korean airline crisis. Balancing, framing, and contextualising Soviet 'propaganda' in terms of an assumed consensus around

the basic issue of 'what happened', the Soviet account was constructed as a less favoured one on the news. Ironically perhaps, one of the BBC's correspondents noted on September 9th: "the Americans are sure they're winning the propaganda war". Given the nature of the coverage examined here, this hardly seems surprising.

The Moscow news conference of September 9th saw the end of the most intense phase of the propaganda war. The crisis remained in the news for another week, but there were no further revelations to come during the sample period.

We have argued that coverage of US and Soviet propaganda during this period was not 'impartial'. The evidence suggesting genuine Soviet confusion, or American responsibility in the tragedy was never seriously examined, nor was it used - with the exceptions of Wheeler's reports discussed above - to give legitimacy to the Soviet account.

~~What happened.~~

This section examines how the various theories about what befell KAL 007 was reported on the news. Although the US State Department never changed its position that the airliner had accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace there were, as we have seen, major question marks over the claim. First to point out these doubts were the Soviet authorities themselves in the TASS statement of September 2nd. That evening, BBC announced that it would: "report on why the Boeing went so far off course, and why it wasn't warned"(1 2100 2/9/83). Later in the bulletin it was reported that:

Demands for explanations about how it happened have been directed at Moscow but, as Moscow's pointed out, it's not only the Russians who have to come up with some answers.

ITN commented that: "Mr Reagan has some explaining of his own to do"(3 2200 2/9/83).

These reports reflected the view that there were valid doubts about the US version of events. But subsequent discussions sidestepped the implications of these opening remarks and assumed the correctness of the Americans' account. The peculiarities 'pointed out by Moscow' were resolved by journalists without serious consideration of the central Soviet allegation that the Korean airliner had been involved in an intelligence mission. This account was beyond the parameters of legitimacy. The spy plane theory was referred to only in the context of 'what the Soviets say', i.e. as 'propaganda'. The failure to include the spy plane theory in their accounts of what might have happened reflected the journalists' refusal to grant the Soviet

account credibility. The question of what happened to the Korean airliner was raised in four main evening bulletins throughout the sample period. None of these reports included the Soviet account in their speculation about the mystery of KAL 007. BBC's report of September 2nd set out one of the problems in the US account:

If American and Japanese military authorities knew the Korean jet was out of bounds, why didn't anyone tell the crew? American monitoring stations had listened to Russian air defence controllers scrambling the first interceptors two hours before the plane was shot down. Japanese controllers spotted the Russian fighters on their long-range military radar. There's no doubt American forces based in Japan were getting the same picture. The aircraft called Tokyo with a routine request to climb eleven minutes before being destroyed. At that time it was well inside Russian airspace, with Sakoy Flaggers flying alongside, yet Tokyo control didn't mention it to the captain.

What comes next was typical of the way in which journalists resolved the question of what happened. Excluding the possibility of a planned espionage mission, marginalising it to the realm of the incredible, journalists had no recourse but to speculate freely on the possible accidents that could have occurred. Accounting for the failure of the Japanese or US authorities to warn the airliner, when they had by their own admission monitored the entire flight, one journalist concluded:

It's all beginning to point to a disastrous lack of communication between military and civilian authorities.

This could have been the case, although there was no more evidence to support this explanation than there was for the Soviet account. Indeed, US intelligence sources later revealed that communications in the region were extremely

sophisticated, a fact made embarrassingly clear by the ease with which the entire incident was recorded by the US. Nevertheless, 'a disastrous lack of communications' is introduced as an authoritative suggestion, and indeed the only one, while the possibility of a 'pre-planned mission' is not raised. ITN's correspondent chose not to propose any specific theory on the subject:

The Americans now say that they have a very clear picture of how the Russians shot down the South Korean plane. But when did the Americans have that information? If they knew what was going on while it was happening why did they not intervene directly, perhaps using the Washington-Moscow hotline? It's one of the many questions still surrounding the last hours of the South Korean plane.(3 2200 2/9/83)

The issue was again covered on September 16th:

The Japanese have released a tape recording of the last exchanges between the aircraft and Tokyo ground control. The pilot sounds calm, the flight appears to be proceeding as scheduled, then comes the realisation that something is wrong.

The recordings do nothing to clear up the mystery. The Japanese air traffic controllers monitoring their radar screens should have realised the plane was off course and warned it. If the Russians did fire warning tracer shots the Korean aircrew should have seen them. But four minutes from disaster air traffic controller and pilot were chatting about a routine change of altitude.(1 2100 16/9/83)

This report concedes that the US account is not entirely satisfactory, but the Soviet explanation is again excluded from the available explanations for what happened.

The question of how the airliner had deviated so far from its course was also discussed, but within a similarly limited range of possibilities. The only explanations included on the news were those which assumed that the Korean flight's course

deviation was accidental. Debate was not permitted to include the possibility of an intentional 'error'. The viewer was not given any background as to the actual likelihood of the various possibilities that were raised.

Why was the jet so far off course? The fact that the pilot thought he was on track suggests a wrong reading on the plane's inertial navigation system. That could only happen if there'd been a mistake in setting the original coordinates for latitude and longitude. One degree equals sixty nautical miles, and any error would be compounded in the long haul across the Pacific. The routine check calls to Japanese trans-oceanic control reported the airliner as on a correct heading. It wouldn't have been until the Jumbo came within radar range that the true position became clear.(1 2100 2/9/83)

No indication was given of how unlikely such an error would have been. ITN constructed an experiment with a flight simulator and came up with an entirely different, if equally unsubstantiated scenario:

One possibility that's being considered is a total electrical failure...This kind of problem has occurred before on passenger-carrying jets and tonight it's being considered as an explanation for the Korean plane being so far off course.(3 2200 2/9/83)

There were many possible explanations as to why the aircraft had made such a disastrous error. 'Total electrical failure' was no less likely than the majority of those proposed. Of interest to us here is the fact that no explanation other than that of accidental error was considered in these accounts. The Soviet explanation, with its implications for the United States role in the incident, was excluded. News programmes on BBC2 and Channel 4 (with the exception noted above) reported these problems within the same basic assumption: that the spy-plane theory was not

credible. On September 2nd Channel 4 news interviewed Admiral Stansfield Turner, a former Director of the CIA, who gave his opinion that the spyplane theory was a possibility, if an unlikely one:

Journalist: Admiral Turner, the Russians are now apparently saying that that plane, a civilian plane, could have been on some kind of reconnaissance flight. Is that possible?

Turner: Of course it's possible. Any plane can conduct reconnaissance. I think it's highly improbable. It's a very ineffective and risky way to conduct intelligence.

Journalist: Is there any record at all, in your experience, of any country using civilian planes as a cover for intelligence-gathering?

Turner: Well, any intelligence officer has to answer that question with a 'no comment'... If the answer is yes and I say 'no comment' you'll know what I'm trying to do.(4 1900 2/9/83)

Admiral Turner, while unable to confirm that the Korean airliner was spying, continued by stressing the circumstances surrounding the incident which might have made the Soviet Union 'overreact'.

Turner: ...without apologising for the Soviets, looking at it from their point of view, this is the second instance when it's a Korean airliner, a civilian airplane that has penetrated deeply into their country. So, with their normal paranoia you can understand their getting excited. That doesn't justify the degree of their response, which was disproportionate to the threat.

Journalist: But you would say they had good reasons to be awfully suspicious?

Turner: I didn't say good reasons. I say a paranoid person, having two instances like this by the same airplane, gets suspicious, easily in the Soviet Union.

Although Admiral Turner took the spyplane theory more seriously than other speakers in the sample his opinion was not reflected in Channel 4's own appraisal of 'how it

happened':

It's still far from clear what really happened to Korean Airlines Flight 007.

Three theories were then introduced:

The first suggests a computer failure in the plane's navigational equipment, but 747s carry sophisticated navigational systems with three computers that continuously check each other. If the computers fail, a light warns the pilot. Human error in programming the navigation computers is much more likely... The 'Marie Celeste' theory is also possible. It suggests that pressure of oxygen in the aircraft dropped suddenly, rendering crew and passengers unconscious and the plane out of control. The trouble with this theory is that the plane actually turned into Soviet airspace and didn't just drift rudderless into restricted zones. But the theory is attractive because it suggests an answer to the second major unanswered question. Why didn't the crew respond to warnings from the Russian jet buzzing it? If the crew were unconscious, they'd be unable to.

From 'computer failure' to 'Marie Celeste' these theories were as speculative as any proposed on main evening bulletins, though the journalist sought to present them as superior to the Soviet explanation:

The new Russian suggestion, that the plane was on a spying mission, sounds as amazing as science fiction.

No more amazing than the 'Marie Celeste' theory, it might be thought. News programmes generally failed to break away from the assumption that the Korean airliner had accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace.

As late as September 16th BBC2's Newsnight concluded after a lengthy report that there was "only one plausible explanation" for the flight of KAL 007, this being "navigational error". According to pilots who have flown the

KAL 007 flight such a major deviation from course is impossible. On this programme it was reported to be "a regular occurrence".

The inadequacy of the Soviet public relations machine, alluded to in the introduction to this chapter, cannot be held to account entirely for the fact that the Reagan Administration won the key issues in the propaganda war at the time when it most mattered. Given that the Soviet Union did not 'use' the Western media with the same facility as their protagonists in the propaganda war, they did nevertheless present a version of events which on the evidence available was no less credible than any other account making the news. Official Western accounts presented the Korean airline disaster as confirmation and vindication of the Soviet Threat. This framework was rarely challenged on the news, although evidence supporting the Soviet account was available as early as September 3rd. We have given examples of occasions as early as September 5th and 6th when the dominant framework was challenged, and these are extremely important to the overall picture, but they were far from being representative. One final counter-example further confirms that critical approaches to official US propaganda were available. The programme is Channel 4's Friday Alternative, now defunct. On September 17th it compared the response of the Reagan Administration to the Korean Airliner incident with the response of President Nixon ten years earlier to a similar tragedy:

Journalist: In the uproar over the tragedy of Flight 007 the Soviet public image has taken a battering. President Reagan has lost no opportunity to shame the Russians.

what are we to make, he demanded, of a regime that establishes one set of standards for itself and another for the rest of humankind'. In the diplomacy game moral outrage coupled with truth outpoint all opponents. But has US policy been consistent?

Ten years ago Israel shot down a Libyan airliner which had strayed into its airspace. For the victims the Israelis, unlike the Russians, offered compensation. But their explanations for the events were strikingly similar. Both countries have emphasised similar criteria for shooting down a civilian airliner. But ten years ago US President Nixon simply expressed regret. There were no flags at half-mast, no sanctions, no change in US-Israeli relations. How can two such similar tragedies provoke two such different reactions? In the diplomacy game it all depends on who is in the firing line.

In this major international crisis with potentially dangerous consequences for Britain (as a host country for US nuclear weapons) broadcasting journalists on the whole showed themselves unwilling or unable to adopt a critical distance from the propaganda campaign mounted by one side against the other. At the time of writing it is clear that the United States's account of the incident was based on ideology rather than facts, and that accusations of barbarism and murder directed at the USSR were politically-motivated.

On Newsnight of September 10th, 1986, Seymour Hersch warned that "our inability to back off and tell the truth about [the Korean Airline disaster] is very ominous...The lesson the Russians had better glean from this is that in a crisis we aren't willing to tell the truth about what we know".

The conclusion of this study is that at the time when it most mattered, the Reagan Administration's largely propagandistic account of the disaster was rarely contested by British television journalists.

Notes.

1. R.W. Johnson's book about the incident, Shootdown: The Verdict on KAL 007, was published by Chatto & Windus in May 1986, and reviewed by Paul Foot in The London Review of Books, published on July 24th, 1986. Foot describes Johnson's exposition of the spy-plane theory as "a political expose of the highest order" and concedes that "when all the arguments pile up on one side of the scales, the rational mind hesitates... is it really possible that responsible people in a democracy could behave in such a reckless way?"

2. Broder argued, on behalf of his clients, that if the Soviet account was shown to correct:

There would be an investigation as to why there was a cover up of this which would exceed anything we saw in the Watergate era. It would be a disgraceful affair that our government from the very first day following the occurrence denied all responsibility and then it turned out that they were responsible, that it was an espionage mission. There's no doubt in my mind that this would go on for years in an effort to get at the heart of this: whether our President was aware of it, what information he had, when he learned of it, and why he failed to disclose it to the American public.

Appendix 4.1. Newsnight, September 6th, 1983.

Journalist: The people who still wonder how it was that the actor Ronald Reagan became President of the United States, and for those who wonder if he'll be reelected if next year he runs for a second term, his speech last night provides the answer. America found in Reagan a leader with a simple comprehensible philosophy, and an exceptional ability to put his case across. He was always good at television. Last night he was matchless. Three years in office has made Reagan the master of his role. His popularity and his power have given his actor's talent an edge that wasn't there before. He was helped of course by the nature of the issue. A civil airliner packed with innocent people sent to their deaths by a Soviet missile. A simple case, he said, not merely of murder. As though it were a feature film he gave the tragedy a title - the Korean Airline Massacre, and he called it that five times.

Reagan: My fellow-Americans, I'm coming before you tonight about the Korean airline massacre. The attack by the Soviet Union against 269 men, women and children aboard an unarmed Korean passenger plane. This crime against humanity must never be forgotten, here or throughout the world. Our prayers tonight are with the victims and their families in their time of terrible grief. Our hearts go out to them, to brave people like Kathryn McDonald, the wife of the congressman whose eloquence and composure on the day of her husband's death moved us all. He will be sorely missed by all of us here in government. The parents of one slain couple wired me: 'our daughter and her husband died on Korean airline flight 007. Their deaths were the result of the Soviet Union violating every concept of human rights. The emotions of these parents, grief, shock, anger, are shared by civilised people everywhere. From around the world press accounts reflect an explosion of condemnation by people everywhere, but despite the savagery of their crime, the universal reaction against it and the evidence of their complicity the Soviets still refuse to tell the truth. They have persistently refused to admit that their pilot fired on the Korean aircraft. Indeed they've not even told their own people that a plane was shot down. They have spun a confused tale of tracking the plane by radar until it just mysteriously disappeared from their radar screens, that noone fired a shot of any kind.

Japanese ground sights recorded the interceptor plane's radio transmissions, their conversations with their own ground control. We only have the voices from the pilots. The Soviet ground to air transmissions were not recorded. It's plain however from the pilot's words that he's responding to orders and queries from his own ground control. Here's a brief segment of the tape which we're going to play in its entirety to the United Nations Security Council tomorrow.

And make no mistake about it. This attack was not just against ourselves or the republic of Korea. This was the Soviet Union against the world and the moral precepts which guide human relations among people everywhere. It was an act of barbarism, born of a society which wantonly disregards

human rights and the value of human life and seeks constantly to expand and dominate other nations. They deny the deed, but in their conflicting and misleading protestations the Soviets reveal that yes, shooting down a plane, even one full of innocent men, women, children and babies, is a part of their normal behaviour if that plane is in what they claim is their airspace. But we shouldn't be surprised by such inhuman brutality. Memories come back of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, the gassing of villages in Afghanistan. If the massacre and their subsequent conduct is intended to intimidate they have failed in their purpose. From every corner of the globe the word is defiance in the face of this unspeakable act, and defiance of the system which excuses it and tries to cover it up.

With our horror and our sorrow there is a righteous and terrible anger. It would be easy to think in terms of vengeance, but that is not a proper answer. We want justice and action to see that this never happens again.

Journalist: At this point the President listed the measures he hopes the world will take against the Soviet Union to see, as he put it that justice is done. The suspension of flights and the demand for compensation. He confirmed that his Secretary of State Mr Schultz will be meeting Mr Gromyko, if Mr Gromyko comes to that meeting, he said. He confirmed too that the Geneva arms talks will not be broken off. And lastly, speaking as a man who's seen his view of the world and the policies that spring from it resoundingly endorsed by this murderous attack Mr Reagan addressed himself to the opposition he's encountered in the Congress to increased military spending.

Reagan: The Congress will be facing key national security issues when it returns from recess. There has been legitimate difference of opinion on this subject I know, but I urge the members of that distinguished body to ponder long and hard the Soviets' aggression as they consider the security and safety of our people, indeed all people who believe in freedom. Senator Henry Jackson, a wise and revered statesman and one who probably understood the Soviets as well as any American in history warned us, 'the greatest threat the United States now faces is posed by the Soviet Union'. Senator Jackson said 'if America maintains a strong deterrent, and only if it does, this nation will continue to be a leader in the crucial quest for enduring peace among nations'.

The late senator made those statements in July on the Senate floor, speaking on behalf of the MX missile programme he considered vital to restore America's strategic parity with the Soviets. We are more determined than ever to reduce and if possible eliminate the threat hanging over mankind. We know it will be hard to make a nation that rules its own people through force to cease using force against the rest of the world, but we must try. This is not a role we sought. We preach no manifest destiny. But like Americans who began this country and brought forth this last best hope of mankind history has asked much of the americans of our time. Much we

Let us have faith in Abraham Lincoln's words, that 'right makes might' and in that faith let us to the end dare to our duty as we understand it. If we do, if we stand together and move forward with courage then history will record that some good did come from this monstrous wrong that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives. Thankyou, God bless you, and goodnight.

Journalist: President Reagan addressing the nation. Reactions here vary widely. From the left to the political centre there is clearly relief that the actions the President has called for are strictly limited. 'The White House avoids flamboyance' says the New York Times, and from CBS, 'the speech of a statesman'. At the other end of the political spectrum, the far Right, it is being called a 'namby-pamby speech that won't wash with the American people because it is too soft' and that has been the reaction clearly anticipated by the President's aides. At a White House briefing they stressed that the restraint he showed does not mean any softening in his attitude to the Russians, and in private conversations duly put into print today they added that the appearance of restraint was crucial to Mr Reagan for foreign and political reasons. Well restraint it seems is in the eye of the beholder. Perhaps it can be said that in this observer's view Mr Reagan came closer last night than John Kennedy, or Lyndon Johnson, or Richard Nixon ever did, to being a demagogue.

Part III. Reporting the Nuclear Debate

Chapter Five

The Superpower Dialogue

Previous chapters have argued that the views of the US government tend to be privileged in relation to the Soviet view. The Korean Airline disaster was a special case, with unusual features, but this chapter argues that the tendency for television news to construct US views as a privileged account is also evident in the less explosive, but in many ways more important debate surrounding arms control.

The arms control negotiations took place partly in response to the development of the defence debate and to rising public concern about the arms race. The collapse of detente, the acceleration of the arms race, and apparent changes in NATO war-fighting strategy, produced a wave of popular opposition to nuclear weapons, as well as dissent in the ranks of NATO governments. This was a major factor inducing the Reagan Administration to open arms control dialogue with the Soviet Union. The dialogue, when it came, occupied the centre stage in international politics. The issues were complex, the figures and categories of weapon confusing even to seasoned observers, and television's role in reporting and explaining the talks was crucial.

Ronald Reagan came to power in the United States at the head of a conservative coalition whose members took up key positions in his first Administration. They argued that the Soviet Union was a threatening, expansionary power and that it had established military superiority as a consequence of

the policies of previous administrations. For this newly elected group arms control talks with the USSR were counterproductive to the aim of containing the Soviet Threat. Ronald Reagan's own record of opposition to nuclear arms control agreements made with the Soviet Union included the Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty, SALTs I and II[2], and his entry into arms control talks after 1980 was widely perceived as less the consequence of a belief in the intrinsic value of arms control than a political response to public concerns about the Administration's attitudes. Talbott notes that

by the end of 1981 political pressures... induced Reagan to offer an initiative on strategic weapons. But the prevailing approach in the Administration to arms control and defence policies still seems to be guided by [the following] rather remarkable proposition... If forced by political expediency to make proposals and engage in negotiations, the US must insist on drastic cutbacks in the most modern, potent Soviet weapons... no comparable reductions are required, or should be considered, in existing American forces (1982).

Soviet leaders, on the other hand, claimed to be sincerely interested in arms control because, they argued, they had no reason to pursue an arms race, and wished to reduce military expenditure and increase standards of living in their already hard-pressed economy. They would, they said, agree to any level of arms reduction compatible with the maintenance of 'strategic parity' with the USA. The two sides thus approached arms control negotiations not only with conflicting estimates of their respective military strengths but with arguably different attitudes to the principle of arms control itself. This was the context in which negotiations took place after 1980.

Defence and disarmament news covered the dialogue

extensively. This involved coverage of the arms control and disarmament initiatives that emerged periodically from both sides; attempts by both sides to go over the heads of normal diplomatic procedures and appeal directly through the media to the populations of the Western countries; and the efforts of each side respectively to blame the other for the evident failure of the arms control process. The following discussion examines some key events in this coverage from the Zero Option of November 1981 to the eve of the breakdown of the talks in 1983.

On November 18th, 1981, in his National Press Club speech, the 'Zero Option' was unveiled before the world with the words of President Reagan that it would be, "like the first step on the moon, an historic step for mankind". The Zero Option was to form the basis of the United States negotiating position at the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) talks with the Soviet Union in Geneva. It set out the United States' willingness to cancel its planned deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles (according to the dual-track decision of December 12th, 1979) if the Soviet Union would withdraw and dismantle its intermediate range theatre nuclear weapons in Europe: the SS-4, SS-5 and SS-20 missiles (this demand was later revised to include those theatre weapons stationed in Soviet Asia). The following discussion refers to coverage of the Zero Option on two main evening news bulletins of November 18th, 1981 (for the full text of the items see Appendix 5.1).

Western opinion on the Zero Option fell into two categories. Officially, it was a serious arms control proposal with a reasonable chance of success. However, an alternative view dismissed it as an exercise in public relations and "Alliance management" and therefore worthless in arms control terms. Three weeks before Ronald Reagan's speech to the National Press Club, on October 28th, the New York Times reported that:

Many European officials would be disappointed if Moscow accepted the Zero Option approach... The adoption of the Zero Option at the beginning of the coming talks is a necessary public relations move. They hoped it would

Some observers, including people close to the Administration, suggested that the Zero Option had been formulated because of growing concern amongst governments and public in the countries of the NATO alliance about President Reagan's attitude to arms control. Dr William Kincaide, a prominent US defence analyst and consultant to the US government, said of the Zero Option on a BBC Horizon documentary that:

it seemed to strike a chord of sanity across Europe and the United States. Taken alone the proposal seemed equitable, but it ignored many critical factors in the balance of nuclear weapons in Europe. It took no account of aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons, nor of how the French and British nuclear forces were to be treated. And it made no sense whatsoever when the superpowers had set no limits on the number of their ICBMs. With all these other issues left out of the talks the Zero Option stood no chance. Nevertheless the proposal drew applause on both sides of the Atlantic, as it was meant to, for in the words of one official at the time, 'it's not arms control we're engaged in, it's Alliance management'. One of the reasons for its rejection is that it was largely a public gesture.

The proposal began from the premise that Cruise and Pershing II missiles were a response to the existing Soviet SS-20s. The removal of this new Soviet threat (new in quantitative and qualitative terms, according to NATO) would thus remove the necessity for the United States to deploy its new weapons. If there were no land-based Soviet missiles in Europe, no American equivalents need be deployed. The term 'Zero Option' was intended to signify the Administration's goal of the complete abolition of this class of nuclear weapon in Europe.

The Reagan Administration's estimate of the European theatre nuclear balance indicated massive Soviet superiority but excluded two major categories of nuclear weapon: the British and French nuclear forces and the United States forward-based systems on aircraft and at sea. Excluded from the INF talks under the terms of the Zero Option these weapons would have remained in operation after the Soviet Union had dismantled its entire theatre nuclear force. It was no secret that the Soviet leadership would not discount these weapons, and when indeed it rejected the Zero Option as a serious basis for negotiations few observers inside or out of the Reagan Administration were surprised. The Times on November 19th, 1981, reported the privately-expressed view of Reagan Administration officials "that the chances of gaining Soviet acceptance were slim". In an effort to secure maximum publicity the Reagan Administration paid for the National Press Club speech to be broadcast live by satellite to Western Europe.

Talbott notes that "the place and the time had been chosen to assure the maximum audience in Western Europe. He began speaking at 10 a.m. It was late afternoon across the Atlantic; Europeans coming home from work would be switching on their television sets. The US International Communication Agency paid for live satellite transmission to the European Broadcasting Union"(1983, p80).

In so far as the proposal received extensive television news coverage, the Administration's media strategy was conspicuously successful in Britain's case.

The headlining item on BBC1's early evening bulletin, described the proposal as "significant for the reduction of nuclear and conventional arms in Europe", and "what the White House said it was, a message to the world". It was referred to as "the President's peace offensive", and "a demonstration to the European allies that the Administration is serious in its search for arms control". The correspondent reported President Reagan's view of the proposal as "a big offer, and he expected the Russians to take it seriously".

The only qualification to this interpretation of the proposal which this item reported was contained in a reference to the Soviet viewpoint. This, however, was 'made sense of' entirely within the terms set by the President. To counter the Soviet view that a rough equivalence already existed in intermediate-range weapons in Europe the President employed a bar chart which excluded from the European nuclear balance all British and French nuclear weapons, and all American forward-based systems. This graphic visual image of overwhelming Soviet superiority (see figure 5.1) received no contextualisation or qualification from the correspondent.

Correspondent: And the President countered the Soviet claim that a rough equivalence in these weapons exists.

Reagan: Red is the Soviet build-up, blue is our own, that is 1975, and that is 1981.

Reference was made to the fact that the timing of the Zero Option was related to the rise of the peace movements in Europe, and to the bad press created by the Reagan Administration's "conflicting signals" on issues of war and peace. However, acknowledgment of the proposal's public

relations function did not lead to a critical interpretation of its value as an arms control proposal.

Now the timing of this is all very important. The Administration had become deeply concerned about the peace movements in Europe, and the confusion created by the conflicting signals put out from here on European nuclear policy. The Administration now hopes that confusion is at an end and the Europeans have a clearer idea of United States arms control objectives, a policy to coalesce around and present a united and positive front to the Soviet Union.

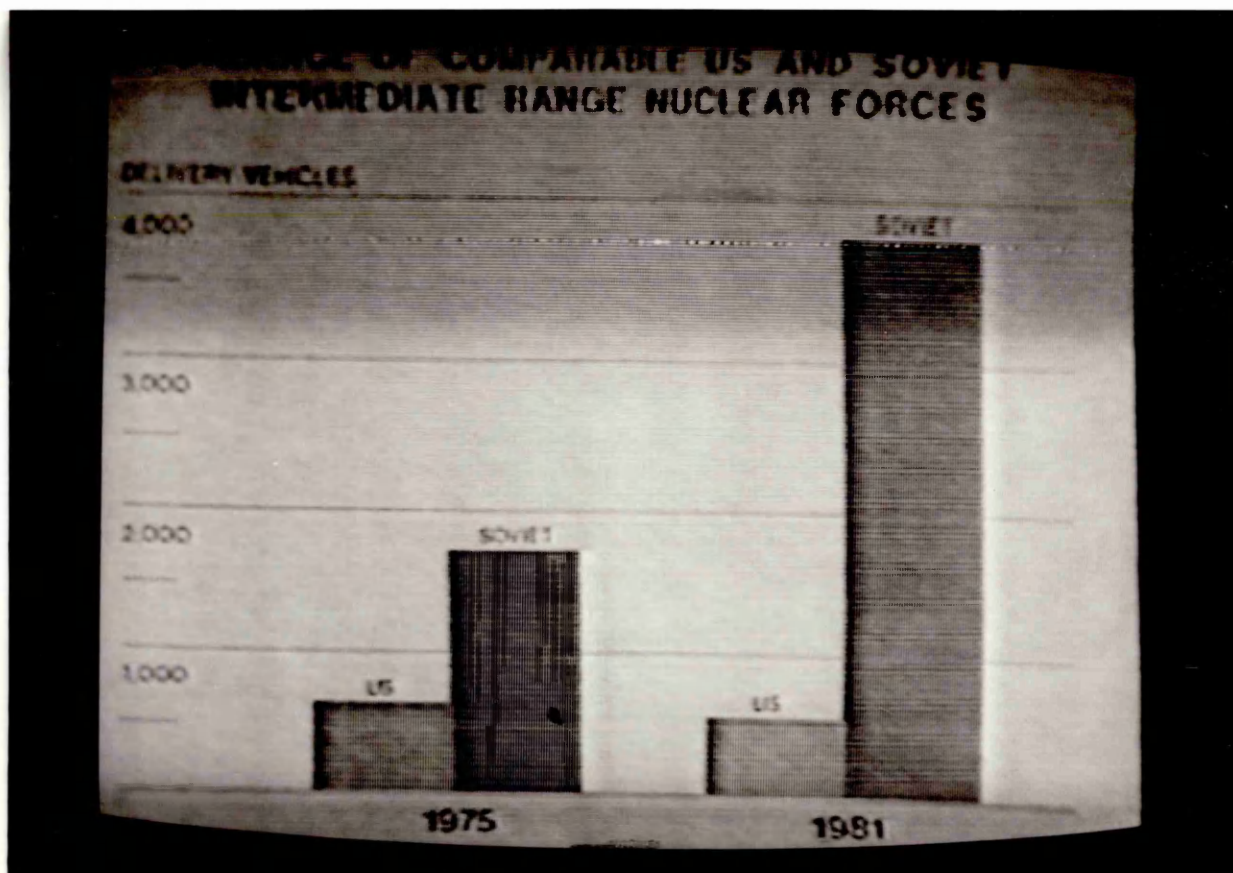
On the one hand, we are told that the proposal is a 'demonstration of seriousness', while on the other it is said to be a product of the Administration's 'deep concern' about its image. These contradictory themes were not resolved.

Likely Soviet reaction to the proposal was contextualised by a reference to "Kremlin propagandists" and "the assiduously-cultivated Soviet peace-making image". There were no comparable references to 'White House propagandists' or to the 'assiduously-cultivated peace-making image' of the Reagan Administration.

Bearing in mind Mr Brezhnev's talks in West Germany next week, plus the assiduously-cultivated Soviet peace-making image, Kremlin propagandists are probably aware they can't afford any peremptory dismissal of the American proposals.

ITN's report on News at Ten differed in having to accomodate the fact of a Soviet rejection of the proposal. The newscaster's introduction set out the main content of the proposal, referred to the Soviet interpretation of it as "a propaganda exercise" and then broadcast the relevant section of the Reagan speech.

"Red is the Soviet build-up, blue is our own. That is 1975,
and that is 1981" (1 1740 18/11/81).



As with BBC news, ITN's correspondent acknowledged the public relations function of the proposal, reporting that the Zero Option was intended to counter what were described as the President's "unfortunate remarks about nuclear war in Europe"[3]. The statement that President Reagan "wasn't allowed to answer any questions today" acknowledged the presence of criticism about his public stance. It was also noted that:

One reason for Mr Reagan's statement today was to try and upstage Mr Brezhnev who is visiting West Germany next week, and who will present himself as the leader really seeking nuclear disarmament.

The other major reason for the Reagan statement was to try and counter the way the anti-nuclear movement in Europe has portrayed the Americans as the bad guys more so than the Russians.

The correspondent then reported 'speculation' (from unnamed sources) that the effect of the anti-nuclear movement would be to help the Soviets 'spin out' the Geneva talks.

The peace rallies have delighted Moscow because they are seriously undermining the resolve of the West German government to have the NATO missiles on their soil. And it speculated the Soviets might try to spin out the Geneva talks in the hope that the NATO plans for new missiles might fall apart under democratic pressure. And then in the end Russia wouldn't have to give up any of her missiles at all.

As in BBC's account, ITN produced no critical 'reading' of the Zero Option, although ITN's account of the INF debate qualified Mr Reagan's use of the bar chart with an acknowledgment that views on the nuclear balance in Europe "depend on what type of weapons you include".

To the Russians it seems that President Reagan is asking them to remove about 1000 warheads while NATO keeps its forces as they are. The talks starting in a fortnight in Geneva are about nuclear weapons aimed at targets in

Europe, and Mr Reagan used a coloured chart to illustrate his view of the massive Soviet nuclear advantage in Europe, an advantage the Russians deny.

The talks will be extremely complicated. NATO says the Russians have a big nuclear advantage with their SS-20 missiles, but the Russians say there is a rough balance of nuclear forces in Europe. It all depends on what type of weapons you include, and the first big problem in the talks will be to find common ground. The Americans just want to talk about missiles, but the Russians want to include American aircraft which carry nuclear bombs.

While its 'public relations' background was reported, neither BBC nor ITN item contested the dominant definition of the Zero Option as a serious arms control proposal.

Coverage of the Zero Option was not an isolated example of television news' approach to US proposals, as coverage of the START talks illustrates.

In the National Press Club speech President Reagan had announced a proposal to open negotiations with the Soviet Union on the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons. Unlike the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, said the President, the objective of these talks would be not merely to limit nuclear weapons but to reduce them.

On May 31st, 1982 the President announced that the negotiations would begin less than one month later, on June 29th. Television news reports noted the political expediency of these talks for the President:

It was a speech quite clearly adjusted to the politics of his trip to Europe.(1 2100 31/5/82)

It was widely anticipated that President Reagan's intended 'good-will' trip to Europe in June 1982 would meet with mass opposition from the peace movements. The new proposal was

designed at least in part to head off this opposition, as television news reported.

It was a speech directed at a wider audience, in Western Europe particularly and intended to show the President to them as a friend of the Alliance and a spokesman for peace. There are strong fears that what should be an easy popularity-building trip for the President may be soured by the anti-nuclear movement in Europe.(1 2100 31/5/82)

trying to defuse some of his critics from the anti-nuclear movement the President said his goal was peace. President Reagan pledged to do his utmost so that no other generation of young men will have to sacrifice their lives.(3 1300 31/5/82)

As in the INF talks, the proposals brought by each side to the START talks reflected very different views of the nuclear balance. Proceeding from its assumption of 'strategic parity' with the United States the Soviet Union advocated an immediate freeze on the development and deployment of all strategic nuclear weapons. The United States, concerned with what it argued to be a Soviet strategic superiority in land-based intercontinental missiles (ICBMs) proposed a reduction in sea and land-based missiles to 850 on each side, with a warhead limit of 5000. Of these only half could be land-based. US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Director Eugene Rostow stated before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 13th that this proposal gave "priority to the acute threat to peace and stability posed by the massive build-up of Soviet ballistic missile forces, particularly ICBM capabilities".

Like the Zero Option, there were two basic Western responses to the US START proposal. The official US view, as expressed by Rostow on May 13th, stated that the proposal was

"sound and equitable", a "practical, two-stage approach to strategic arms reduction". Alternatively it was viewed, not as a practical step towards arms reduction but further confirmation of the Reagan Administration's unwillingness to enter into arms control with the Soviet Union. According to this interpretation the proposal would ensure the failure of talks rather than their progress.

The strategic nuclear forces of the United States and the USSR differ qualitatively and in their 'structure' (see Chapter 2). Soviet forces are concentrated on land, with a smaller proportion of sea-based systems and a virtual absence of air-launched weapons. The USA has a predominantly sea-based force with roughly equal proportions of its strength based on land and in the air. The US START proposal excluded the US bomber force, the significance of which can be seen in the fact that by 1984, according to an Observer report of Janury 5th, 1985, the US had 3,740 bomber-based strategic nuclear warheads, compared to 372 on the Soviet side. The potential for expansion of this arm of the US 'strategic triad' led the USSR to demand its inclusion in estimates of the nuclear balance.

Of further importance from the Soviet point of view, the US proposal implied a drastic and far-reaching restructuring of the Soviet nuclear force without any corresponding concession from the United States. Had the Soviet Union accepted the demand that only half of its 5,000 permissible warheads could be deployed on land, it would have had to scrap all of its 1,398 land-based missiles, with the

By contrast the US, with relatively few of its warheads on land would have been able to continue modernising its land-based ICBMs with the new MX and Minuteman III systems, yet remain within the agreed warhead limit. The North Atlantic Assembly's Special Committee on Nuclear Weapons in Europe, concluded that:

Because of the differing force structures of the two sides, the proposal means greater reductions by the Soviet Union... the Soviet Union is required to make major concessions both in numbers and in land-based systems. This... is compounded by the absence of bombers and cruise missiles from the limitations, both of which represent areas of American advantage (Cartwright and Critchley, 1983, p31)[4].

Four news items covered the START talks as they commenced on June 29th, 1982. Three of these adopted the Administration's framework for interpreting the nuclear debate and assessing the value of the START proposal.

For example, journalists presented selective accounts of the nuclear balance which reinforced the logic of the Administration's proposal and assumed the basic legitimacy of the Administration's arms control objectives.

BBC1's main evening news included an account of "how the talks came about"(BBC1 2100 29/6/82), which made no reference to the political pressures on the President but simply repeated the official line on Soviet superiority.

The START talks are designed to replace Jimmy Carter's Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, SALT II, which was agreed with Leonid Brezhnev three years ago. President Reagan and Congress refused to accept it on the grounds that Mr Carter had permitted the Russians to take advantage of him. Opponents pointed out that ten years ago the United States had slightly more warheads and

Today they say the Soviet Union has a superiority of three to one.

One small but relevant detail was omitted from this account of the failure of SALT II. Those who opposed it argued that SALT II codified Soviet superiority in what they claimed were the most dangerous and destabilising weapons, land-based ICBMs. The Reagan Administration held to this view in the START talks, defending its focus on land-based ICBMs with the assertion that, as Rostow put it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "the Soviets have a lead in this crucial area of approximately three to one".

The broadcaster's account also refers to a "three to one" superiority, but in "warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles", a significantly wider category than land-based ICBMs alone.

This is important because it was only in the latter, more restricted category that a Soviet superiority existed, offset by US superiority in the other legs of the so-called 'strategic triad'. The United States had more warheads overall, the Soviet Union more launchers; the US had more sea and air-launched weapons, the USSR superiority on land. The statement of a general three to one Soviet superiority was accounted for by reference to the SS-18 missile, claimed by the journalist to carry "up to 30" warheads.

The reason is the continued Russian production of heavy missiles such as the SS-18 which can carry up to 30 independently targetable warheads. By contrast, the American Minuteman has only three warheads.

The statement that SS-18s carry 30 warheads is factually

incorrect. They carry ten, as the US Defence Department points out when it states that MIRVed SS-18s carry "eight or ten reentry vehicles"(1982, p56).

Furthermore, this account of the nuclear balance excluded all the categories of weapon which favoured the US and did not refer to factors such as the quality and technological sophistication of weapons, areas in which the United States leads the Soviet Union. The item went on to stress the degree of reduction in armaments proposed in the US START negotiating position.

So President Reagan's speech five weeks ago produced a new way of reducing arms. Instead of counting missiles he wants to count warheads... Such a plan would mean reducing the size of the American nuclear arsenal, in particular its bombers and Trident submarines. That would mean big savings for the defence budget. It would also mean economic relief for the Soviet Union.

This positive reading of START was qualified with a reference to its "many problems" of which only one was specifically mentioned: "the Russians demand that British and French weapons be included in any agreement". This objection to the proposal was not developed.

The US proposal was also said to involve "reducing the nuclear arsenal". However, it was not reported that the Reagan Administration's attraction to counting warheads as opposed to delivery vehicles (missiles) stemmed from the increasing adoption of single-warhead missiles in the US strategic force. Previously, one could limit missiles but increase firepower by 'MIRVing' (putting more warheads onto each missile). The move towards single-warhead systems such

to ensure that the number of missiles could be increased while the number of warheads was limited. The number of new warheads could still be increased by phasing out obsolete multi-warhead systems. Thus it could have been argued that the intention of the US START proposal was to limit Soviet systems while permitting the US to continue its own strategic programme. This point was crucial to an assessment of START.

The item was also incorrect in stating that "in particular, bombers" would be reduced under the terms of the US START proposal. Bombers and the cruise missiles they had the potential to carry were specifically excluded from the negotiations. That the US arsenal would be 'reduced' referred only to outdated nuclear systems. The Administration stressed publicly throughout these negotiations that planned modernisations of the US strategic force, such as MX and Minuteman III, would go ahead irrespective of agreements at Geneva.

In both ITN bulletins of June 29th the asymmetrical nature of the two sides' strategic nuclear forces was pointed out. References to Soviet superiority on land were balanced with references to US superiority at sea although there was no reference to the balance in the air, an area of major US advantage.

There's an imbalance in the type of weapons each side has. The most accurate missiles are land-based. Russia has so many more of these than America, and the US fears her missiles could be destroyed on the ground. America has more of her weapons in submarines and because these ships can hide in the ocean and the missiles cannot easily be destroyed before firing Russia thinks this gives America an edge. 70% of Russian warheads are land-

50% of American warheads are under the sea and only 20% of Russian ones are in submarines.(3 1300 29/6/82)

The START talks were said to have arisen because "the conclusions of the SALT talks are now considered out of date". The Reagan Administration considered SALT to be out of date, but many Western governments and defence analysts - and indeed the USSR - did not. In June 1985 pressure from NATO governments compelled the Reagan Administration to continue to observe the limitations of SALT II, with the result that a Poseidon nuclear submarine was scrapped. News at Ten reported that:

The old agreement limiting these weapons was called SALT, standing for Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, but President Reagan thinks limitation is not enough, so he coined the word START for the new talks. The letters stand for Strategic Arms Reduction Talks and substantial reductions are what the Americans say they want. (3 2200 29/6/82)

There was no reference to the view that the US proposed "substantial reductions" only in the most powerful Soviet weapons, while permitting continued development and production of new US weapons. In the same passage the Soviet START proposal was inferred to be inferior to that of the US, and qualified in the following manner:

So far Russia has just called for a freeze on weapons at existing levels and a freeze on new deployments.

The lunchtime bulletin also referred to the Soviet freeze proposal, and American rejection of it: "America says the freeze would preserve the Russian advantage, and doesn't want to stop development work on two new missiles". No comment was made on these justifications.

These examples have been analysed in some detail because they show how the basic assumptions of the Reagan Administration in the superpower dialogue inform television news coverage. The simplifications and distortions of complex issues which they display, plus the throwaway attitude to Soviet proposals, are inadequate to a full understanding of the debate.

However, if these examples show a general acceptance by journalists of the Reagan Administration's definition of the issues, an important counter-example illustrates the availability at this time of an alternative framework for making sense of START, and the fact that some television journalists are prepared to employ that framework in constructing accounts of the debate. The item, which appeared on Newsnight, contextualised US arms control policy in terms of President Reagan's statements on the subject, and related the START talks to political pressures on the Administration as opposed to a genuine desire for arms control. By this method, which any television journalist might have adopted, the Reagan Administration's arms control policy was 'made to mean' in an entirely different way from that favoured by the majority of television news coverage.

A brief historical resume of the background to START (the failure of SALT II to check the arms race and the refusal of the US Congress to ratify the treaty) led the journalist to pose the following question:

How far is President Reagan consistent in agreeing to these talks, and how far have they been forced on a

This question immediately constructs a framework for understanding US arms control policy which is absent from the other items referred to, and it is answered via Ronald Reagan's own words on arms control, detente and related matters.

Journalist: According to Mr Reagan the rules of detente have allowed the Soviet Union to achieve clear nuclear superiority, an imbalance he was determined to reverse. Once in power Reagan took the position that America should not pursue arms control talks until the Soviet Union mended its aggressive ways.

Reagan: We must immediately start the rebuilding of our defence capability to the point that no nation on this earth will dare lift a hand against us.

Reagan: As long as they at the same time have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they realise is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat in order to attain that end, and that is moral, not immoral, and we operate on a different set of standards I think that when we do business with them, even in a detente, we keep that in mind.

The journalist noted the unpopularity of Reagan's views, and that they had presented his Administration with a public relations problem. Political pressure had been applied by the NATO partners on the basis that "unless the White House reversed its position on arms control talks the Atlantic Alliance would suffer devastating damage". Further examples of Presidential opinion were employed to support the journalist's argument that a public reversal in Reagan's anti-arms control policy did not signify a change in his attitude to the Soviet Union.

Next, the journalist broke with the pattern of most coverage by reporting the view that negotiating with the

Soviet Union for domestic political reasons was not the same thing as making realistic proposals.

Journalist: The President's critics here in Washington simply don't believe in his conversion to the cause of arms control. They say he was acting under pressure, both domestic and foreign. They think that if he'd resisted talking to the Russians about arms control much longer the Atlantic alliance would have come apart, as his former Secretary of State Alexander Haig apparently kept reminding him. But it's one thing to be willing to sit down with the Russians and quite another to make the concessions necessary if there's ever to be an arms control agreement, and on that the European governments who don't have a place at the table may have to keep up the pressure.

This item presented a major extension to the range of views reported in the majority of coverage: a critical reading of START which, in marked contrast to other coverage, became the preferred reading. US arms control policy was contextualised in terms of what was known in June 1982 about the Administration's attitudes. Official proclamations on the sincerity of the US START proposal were contrasted with official statements on the need for the United States to rearm. Making sense of START in this way was an available journalistic option, but it was not repeated in the sample.

The superpower dialogue continued into the General Election of 1983. A subsequent chapter will examine how television news covered the party political defence debate in the Election. Here, however, we will comment on coverage of major exchanges in the superpower dialogue which occurred during the campaign. These centred on two events: the resumption of the INF talks, and the announcement by President Reagan of a new START proposal.

no progress had been made since their commencement in 1982. Channel 4 news defined the "the main sticking point" to be the 'Russian' view that "the independent nuclear forces of both Britain and France be included. The Americans have rejected that idea"(4 1900 17/5/83). It was not explained why, nor was there any coverage of possible American induced 'sticking points'. Newsnight referred to "new Reagan and Andropov proposals"(2 Newsnight 17/5/83)[5], such as the Interim Zero Option of March 30th, 1983. As in previous examples, television news tended to reproduce the US position without criticism. News at Ten, for example, stated that:

the American negotiator has come to Geneva this time with a new mandate to negotiate on any level of arms reduction the Russians are prepared to consider.(3 2200 17/5/83)

This assessment of the Interim Zero Option proposal was challenged by such as Strobe Talbott, who argues that "it did not change US [INF] policy in any significant respect"(see next chapter).

The new START initiative of June 8th - the day before polling - received extensive coverage. The image of the Administration's policies which emerged from this coverage is particularly interesting, given that people were going to vote the next day on arms control, among other election issues. The new US proposal was in its fundamentals no different to the earlier proposition of June 1982. Retaining the demand for a warhead limit of 5,000, it was less stringent on the missile limit of 850. It continued to omit from the terms of an agreement major categories of strategic

weapon in which the USA had a significant superiority. Some commentators observed that the new proposal would permit the USA to further increase its nuclear power with the development of the new Midgetman strategic missile. ITN's coverage reported that the proposal would "let America develop a new single-warhead missile"(3 2200 8/6/83). Nevertheless, coverage of the proposal on June 8th tended to suggest a flexible compromise.

Journalists define the new START proposal in positive terms. Channel 4 announced that it was:

designed to break the deadlock in the START talks (4 1900 8/6/83)

and that it showed:

promising signs of greater flexibility from Washington.

News at Ten assured viewers that the proposal had been made:

in the hopes of getting the Soviets to negotiate... Flexibility is the new catchword.(3 2200 8/6/83)

In three items of coverage President Reagan's views were reported 16 times. Only two non-Reagan views were reported, both from Soviet sources. The first related to the original START proposal of June 1982: "the Russians rejected that outright [because] the vast majority of their missiles are land-based and most would have had to be scrapped"(3 2200 8/6/83). A second reported statement by the Soviets "accused [President Reagan] of stalling".

only the room during the election campaign. Sample constructed a critical reading of the Administration's arms control objectives. This counter-example appeared on a Channel 4 bulletin of May 13th, which used the imminent reopening of the Geneva INF talks as an angle around which to present a report on the activities of the American Arms Control Agency (AACA). The fortunes of the AACA under the Reagan Administration were the starting point for a critical analysis of the seriousness of the latter's arms control objectives. Having explained that the AACA was an independent, advisory body within the US Government, set up in 1961 to assist in drafting the US-Soviet Test Ban Treaty, the correspondent turned to a recent controversy within the agency provoked by the appointment of Kenneth Adelman as Director.

He was viewed by some as a lightweight. The choice of Mr Adelman was seen as evidence that Mr Reagan had little interest in the Arms Control Agency. Questioned at his Senate confirmation hearings Mr Adelman seemed lacking in some of the necessary background information for the job.

Opinions on the significance of Adelman's appointment were sought from AACA officials (who assured the journalist that he was "a man of wide experience and great interest in the field"), Eugene Rostow the previous Director, and Paul Warnke, a former US arms control negotiator. Warnke claimed that "for the President to appoint Mr Adelman confirmed the view of many Americans that he was not serious about arms control". The item concluded by reporting that

at one point it seemed as if President Reagan would disband the entire Arms Control Agency, but that won't happen now. Firstly, because the American Congress won't

project the image of being very much in favour of
verifiable arms control.

In reporting the view that the Reagan Administration's
interest in arms reduction was image rather than substance,
this item, like the Newsnight example of a year earlier
quoted above, was exceptional, and again illustrative of the
increased 'openness' of minority audience news programmes to
a wider range of views and assessments of the nuclear issues.

US proposals are one side of the superpower dialogue. Soviet proposals are the other. From what has previously been said about television news coverage of the USSR, one can hypothesise that the Soviet case in the dialogue is likely to be subordinate in television news accounts, and this is indeed what the evidence of the nuclear freeze and no-first-use proposals suggests.

The first difference between coverage of US arms control proposals and those of the Soviet Union is quantitative. In contrast to the routinely headline-grabbing power of US proposals the Soviet case in the disarmament dialogue has a relatively low priority on the television news agenda and tends to be reported in brief items lacking in background or analysis. This can be explained only in part by the differing approaches to public relations and propaganda taken by the two sides.

But Soviet proposals are also reported within a qualitatively different set of a priori assumptions. The privileged access of US leaders in presenting their own proposals has its converse in their privileged access to dismiss Soviet ones. The Soviet case is not 'excluded', but the USSR does not take part in the superpower propaganda war as the equal partner in an impartial debate.

On television news during the sample period Soviet proposals tended to be 'made sense' of by reference to the views of Western leaders's, and in the absence of Soviet commentators. In one of the examples quoted above a

journalist was heard to describe the Soviet position on strategic weapons as 'just calling for a freeze'. The initial statement of the Soviet nuclear freeze initiative was contained in a speech made by Leonid Brezhnev in Moscow on May 18th, 1982. Brezhnev called for a moratorium on the development, production and deployment of all strategic nuclear weapons while the START talks were taking place. Seven television news bulletins reported the Brezhnev freeze proposal. In five of these the US Government was reported as rejecting the proposal on the grounds that the Soviets had a strategic nuclear superiority. The following examples illustrate the contrast between typical coverage of a Soviet arms control proposal and that of US proposals examined in the previous section. Items began with an account of the Soviet proposal.

In the latest move in the disarmament dialogue between the Soviet Union and America President Brezhnev has said the two countries should stop deploying strategic nuclear weapons.(1 2100 18/5/82)

Followed by an account of the US rejection.

President Reagan rejected the idea but said he's ready to discuss reducing nuclear arms. The American Secretary of State Alexander Haig said the proposal would leave his country at a nuclear disadvantage but the Soviet willingness to negotiate was positive.

According to ITN:

President Brezhnev has said he'll put an immediate freeze on nuclear weapons if the United States does the same... The US President said tonight the speech indicated Mr Brezhnev was willing to hold talks on a new treaty to reduce nuclear weapons, but he couldn't give a date, though his Secretary of State Mr Haig reacted more coolly. He said an arms freeze would leave America at a nuclear disadvantage.(3 2200 18/5/82)

Coverage generally took this form: a brief account of the proposal followed with reports of its rejection by the United States Government. The Reagan Administration, while cautiously 'welcoming' the freeze, rejected it on the grounds that it would perpetuate Soviet nuclear superiority. This logic was consistent with the Administration's own position on arms control but contradicted assessments of the strategic balance made by independent sources. And although this was the only reported opinion no bulletin developed its validity, or examined the possible significance of a nuclear freeze.

We noted earlier references to a possible "peremptory dismissal" of the US Zero Option by Soviet "propagandists". No comparable interpretation was made by journalists of the US response to the freeze proposal. On the contrary, bulletins emphasised the 'welcome' extended by the President to the idea. ITN even implied that President Reagan had been enthusiastic by contrasting his response with that of Alexander Haig who had "reacted more coolly".

A little less than one month later, at the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament the USSR announced its adoption of a 'no-first use' policy - a commitment never to use nuclear weapons first. Support for the policy of no-first use came not only from the Soviet Union. There was a substantial body of opinion in favour of NATO adopting a similar stance, including present and former NATO leaders. From their point of view the policy was perceived as important for NATO's survival, as argued by former US Defence

The basic argument for a no-first-use policy can be stated in strictly military terms: that any other course involves unacceptable risks to the national life that military forces exist to defend (1983).

Television news reported the announcement, made on behalf of Leonid Brezhnev by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, in three news bulletins on June 15th. Coverage was sparse, even compared to that given the freeze proposal. Just how brief can be seen by a word count. News at Ten on ITN devoted 42 words to the story. Earlier in the month the same programme had used 73 words to cover a story about the wife of exiled Soviet chess player Victor Korchnoi. BBC1 reported the declaration in 58 words. It is not suggested that major significance can be drawn from the number of words devoted to a story, but these figures do reveal how little newsvalue was accredited the 'no-first use' declaration by BBC and ITV.

The Soviet Union today pledged that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons. The promise came from the Soviet leader President Brezhnev in a message to a special UN session on disarmament. Mr Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union wanted to do all in its power to deliver people from the threat of nuclear devastation. (1 2100 15/6/82)

President Brezhnev has said that the Soviet Union will not be the first to use nuclear weapons. The promise was read out for him at the Special Session of the United Nations on Disarmament by the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr Andrei Gromyko. (3 2200 15/6/82)

News at Ten's report was immediately followed by a report on the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. A Soviet arms control proposal was juxtaposed with a story about Soviet military aggression.

From Afghanistan though there are reports of a big Soviet victory against guerrilla forces in the Panshar Valley sixty miles north east of the capital Kabul. The Panshar has long been the centre of resistance to Soviet occupation.

The brevity of these items clearly contrasts with coverage of US arms control proposals.

It could be argued that one explanation for the relative lack of newsworthiness accorded Soviet proposals is the context in which they are made. Soviet proposals start off with a disadvantage (as Soviet statements did in the Korean Airline disaster) because speeches delivered in Russian at Party congresses and other official occasions are less attractive media events than President Reagan's statements, broadcast to Europe live by satellite with the White House paying the bills. Nevertheless, Moscow is a great deal closer to Britain than Washington, and coverage of Soviet statements is not impeded by special technical problems. Another possible explanation is the journalists' apparent assumption that Soviet proposals are predictable propaganda exercises from 'peace-loving propagandists' in the Kremlin.

We refer to one final example. In September 1983 the USSR announced that it would dismantle all of its SS-20s removed from the European theatre, rather than simply move them elsewhere in the Soviet Union. This offer was made in response to demands by President Reagan, after the Soviet Union had agreed to reduce its SS-20s to the level of British and French independent forces in Europe. One news bulletin reported the offer in the following terms:

were not merely good intentions. Well, our defence correspondent says its merely another attempt to drive a wedge between America and Europe over Cruise and Pershing.(3 1740 20/9/83)

Talking about the press, Keeble has argued that "one subtle way in which Fleet Street discredits the Soviet Union is by describing its peace proposals as 'propaganda' whilst the West's initiatives are presented as genuine"(Curran et al, eds, 1986, p.53) We would suggest that this feature can also be observed in British television news.

This discussion of television news coverage of the superpower dialogue has included some of the most important initiatives made by both sides in the early 1980s: the Zero Option and START proposals from the United States; the nuclear freeze proposal and no-first-use declaration from the Soviet Union. The debate continues, and it is not argued that the dominant tendency to 'prefer' US accounts of the issues is a fixed one unamenable to change. The counter-examples discussed in this chapter show that the Reagan Administration's arms control policies can be and are criticised in some news accounts. During the sample period however, television news' accounts of the superpower dialogue tended to reflect a priori assumptions about the credibility of the two sides.

1. The Coalition for Peace Through Strength, in its statement 'An Analysis of SALT II' (reproduced in the SALT Handbook) exemplify this position when they claim that as a result of SALT II the United States will "be locked into strategic inferiority and overall military inferiority. The imbalance in both strategic and conventional military power has grown worse during the period of SALT"(p681).

2. As the two sides entered another round of arms control talks in January 1985 (not covered in the sample) these attitudes continued to prevail in the second Reagan Administration as the comments of influential officials like Assistant Secretary of State Richard Perle made clear: "The sense that we and the Russians could compose our differences, reduce the treaty constraints, enter into agreements, treaties, reflecting a series of constraints, and then rely on compliance to produce a safer world, I don't agree with any of that"(The Observer, January 6th, 1985).

3. A reference to the theory of limited nuclear war. Reagan's belief in the possibility of waging limited nuclear war in Europe had caused considerable alarm. He was the first American President to make it an openly-declared matter of policy that such a war could be fought in the European 'theatre'.

4. Two developments were important in this respect. Firstly, the B-2 bomber project was accelerated by the Reagan Administration when it entered office, and plans were got underway to develop a new generation of 'stealth' bomber. Secondly, the development of the air-launched Cruise missile greatly increased the potential of US aircraft to be used as strategic nuclear weapons platforms. The START proposal excluded Cruise missiles from its remit.

5. Reagan's new proposal was the Interim Zero Option of March 30th, 1983. Andropov's was an offer to reduce the number of warheads on SS-20s to the same number as British and French levels.

Appendix 5.1. Main news coverage of the Zero Option, November 18th, 1981.

BBC1 1740 18/11/81

Newscaster to camera.

Newscaster: President Reagan in his first major speech on foreign policy has made significant proposals to President Brezhnev for the reduction of nuclear and conventional arms in Europe. Mr Reagan says he sent a simple yet historic message to the Soviet President which, if it was accepted, would be like the first man on the moon, a giant step for mankind. The President told Mr Brezhnev he was prepared to cancel

Vo*, still, Cruise missile in flight, text, 'United States - cancel 572 Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles'.

America's 572 Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles planned for Europe if the Russians

Vo, still, Soviet missiles, text, 'Soviet Union - remove SS-4, SS-5 and SS-20 missiles'.

removed their SS-4s, SS-5s and SS-20 missiles.

Vo, still, US bomber, text, 'US proposals - reduction in strategic arms and forces, reductions in conventional forces, conference on risks of surprise attack.

He said America would hold negotiations on reductions in strategic arms and forces, and that they would also discuss reductions in conventional forces reduction in strat maintained by the Warsaw Pact. And finally Mr Reagan proposed a conference forces, reduction to reduce the risks of a surprise attack in conventional by either side. Martin Bell reporting.

Vo, film, Reagan arriving at National Press Club.

Crr: In form it was a speech to the National Press Club but in substance what the White House said it was, a message to the world. In it the President set out the arms control proposals he had made in a letter to Mr Brezhnev including what Mr Reagan described as a big offer, and he expected the Russians to take it seriously.

Reagan to news conference.

Reagan: The United States is prepared to cancel its deployment of Pershing 2 and ground-launched missiles if the Soviets will dismantle their SS-20, SS-4 and SS-5 missiles. This would be an historic step.

	substantially reduce the dread of nuclear war which hangs over the people of Europe. This, like the first footstep on the moon, would be a giant step for mankind.
Vo, film, Reagan speaking.	Crr: And the President countered the Soviet claim that a rough equivalence in these weapons exists.
Reagan to news conference.	Reagan: Red is the Soviet build-up, blue is our own, that is 1975, and that is 1981.
Vo, film, Reagan speaking.	Crr: On strategic weapons the President said he was looking for more than arms limitation.
Reagan to news conference.	Reagan: To symbolise this fundamental change in direction we will call these negotiations START, strategic arms reduction talks.
Vo, film, Reagan speaking.	Crr: The President finished by quoting President Kennedy, looking for a world where the strong should be just, the weak secure and the peace preserved.
Reagan to news conference.	Reagan: He didn't live to see that goal achieved. I invite all nations to join with America today in the quest for such a world.
Vo, film, Reagan being applauded.	Crr: This then was the President's peace offensive, a series of proposals to the Soviet Union and just as important, a demonstration to the European allies that the Administration is serious in its search for arms control.
Correspondent to camera.	Now the timing of this is all very important. The Administration had become deeply concerned about the peace movements in Europe, and the confusion created by the conflicting signals put out from here on European nuclear policy. The Administration now hopes that confusion is at an end and the Europeans have a clearer idea of United States arms control objectives, a policy to coalesce around and present a united and positive front to the Soviet Union.
Newscaster to camera.	Nc: In Moscow the American Embassy quickly released the full text of President Reagan's proposals and the US Ambassador Mr Hartman had talks with the Soviet Foreign Minister Mr Gromyko on

international matters. The two sides meet in Geneva in 12 days time to discuss medium-range nuclear missiles. John Osman reports from Moscow.

Vo, still,
Kremlin, inset
correspondent.

Crr: President Reagan's offer of arms reduction was the main subject of the talks between Mr Gromyko and the American ambassador. An Embassy spokesman told me that Mr Gromyko had been given a preview of Mr Reagan's speech and that the Foreign Minister had a substantial exchange with the ambassador which lasted over an hour. The Soviet news agency TASS however did not immediately report the Reagan proposals, probably a sign that top-level consideration was being given by the Kremlin to the precise handling of the Soviet reply. Bearing in mind Mr Brezhnev's talks in West Germany next week, plus the assiduously-cultivated Soviet peace-making image, Kremlin propagandists are probably aware they can't afford any peremptory dismissal of the American proposals.

Newscaster to camera.

Ne: President Reagan told the Russians today he'll scrap plans for new missiles in Europe if they'll dismantle their medium-range SS-20s, SS-5s and SS-4s. But only a few hours later the Russians rejected his plan out of hand as a propaganda exercise. The missiles Mr Reagan says he'll withdraw haven't been deployed yet, but they're wanted by NATO to cancel out what NATO says is a big Russian advantage in medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe.

Reagan to news conference.

Reagan: The United States is prepared to cancel its deployment of Pershing 2 and ground-launched missiles if the Soviets will dismantle their SS-20, SS-4 and SS-5 missiles. This would be an historic step. With Soviet agreement we could together substantially reduce the dread of nuclear war which hangs over the people of Europe. This, like the first footstep on the moon, would be a giant step for mankind.

Correspondent to camera, backdrop still, US and Soviet missiles interlinking.

Crr: President Reagan's speech was arranged after his recent unfortunate remarks about nuclear war in Europe. The White House presumably thought it essential to get one clear definitive statement on America's attitude to war and peace firmly on the record. The speech was broadcast live by satellite to Europe, with the White House picking up the bill.

Vo, film, Reagan leaving National Press Club.

It was interesting to note that since Mr Reagan's recent faux pas have usually been in response to journalists' questions, today he wasn't allowed to answer any.

Correspondent to camera, backdrop still, US and Soviet missiles interlinking.

Well the Russians are already opposed to the American plan. The official Soviet news agency TASS says the Kremlin would reject the offer out of hand. To the Russians it seems that President Reagan is asking them to remove about 1000 warheads while NATO keeps its forces as they are.

Vo, film, Reagan speaking.

The talks starting in a fortnight in Geneva are about nuclear weapons aimed at targets in Europe, and Mr Reagan used a coloured chart to illustrate his view of the massive Soviet nuclear advantage in Europe, an advantage the Russians deny.

Vo, still,
SS-20 launching.

The talks will be extremely complicated. NATO says the Russians have a big nuclear advantage with their SS-20 missiles,

Vo, still,
Polaris launching.

but the Russians say there is a rough balance of nuclear forces in Europe. It all depends on what type of weapons you include, and the first big problem in the talks will be to find common ground. The Americans just want to talk about missiles, but the Russians want to include American aircraft which carry nuclear bombs.

Vo, still,
US aircraft.

Both the American and Soviet presidents have now declared their desire to reduce nuclear arms in Europe, but achieving it will not be easy.

Vo, still,
Reagan and
Brezhnev.

One reason for Mr Reagan's statement today was to try and upstage Mr Brezhnev who is visiting West Germany next week, and who will present himself as the leader really seeking nuclear disarmament.

Vo, film,
anti-nuclear
rallies.

The other major reason for the Reagan statement was to try and counter the way the anti-nuclear movement in Europe has portrayed the Americans as the bad guys more so than the Russians. The peace rallies have delighted Moscow because they are seriously undermining the resolve of the West German government to have the NATO missiles on their soil. And its speculated the Soviets might try to spin out the Geneva talks in the hope that the NATO plans for new missiles might fall apart under democratic pressure. And then in the end Russia wouldn't have to give up any of her missiles at all.

* Voice-over.

Chapter Six

Peace Movement News

The intensifying nuclear debate was further expressed in the bitter public dialogue which developed between Western governments and their own citizens.

The anti-nuclear protest movement constituted a visible and vocal opposition to dominant views on nuclear defence and was partly responsible for exerting the political pressures which led the Reagan Administration to enter arms control talks with the Soviet Union. While attempting to assuage popular concerns over peace with the Zero Option and START proposals Western governments also engaged the peace movements in a dialogue which paralleled that going on with the USSR. Television news coverage of that dialogue and the activities of the peace movements are the subjects of this chapter[1].

The discussion refers mainly to the two routine news samples of May 1st to June 30th, 1982, and May 10th to June 8th, 1983. 54 items of 'peace movement news' were identified over these sample periods (see table 6.1).

The analysis also looks in detail at three days of news coverage over the Easter weekend of 1983, when CND activists and members of the Greenham Common peace camp demonstrated at the nuclear establishments in Burghfield, Aldermaston, and Greenham Common - Nuclear Valley, as it had become known to the peace movement.

June 1982 and May 10th - June 8th, 1983.

CND blockade of RAF Upper Heyford, May 1983	10
CND protests at RAF Upper Heyford, May 1983	2
Anti-Reagan protests, June 1982	6
CND Hyde Park Rally, June 1982	4
New York Nuclear Freeze Rally, June 1982	4
UNSSDII protests, June 1982	7
Anti-MX protests in Washington, May 1983	1
IWDD* protests, May 1983	1
Anti-peace movement march, June 1983	1
Greenham women evicted, May 1983	4
Benn condemns Greenham violence, May 1983	1
END conference, Berlin 1983	1
Green MPs arrested in East Berlin	4
Vatican, Heime, Kent, May 1983	2
Comiso Peace Camp, May 1983	1
Anti-nuclear theatre, May 1982	1
The peace issue in East Germany, May 1983	1
Thatcher at the UNSSDII**	1

Total 54

* International Women's Day for Disarmament.

** Second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament.

Between 1979 and 1983 membership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the main anti-nuclear group in Britain, grew from 3,000 to 80,000[2]. It encompassed professional organisations such as Scientists Against Nuclear Extermination (SANE), Teachers for Peace, and hundreds of local groups. In June 1982 250,000 people took part in a march and rally at Hyde Park in London. In October 1983, again in London, a similar event involved an estimated 400,000 people. The demonstration of Easter 1983, news coverage of which is discussed in this chapter, involved an estimated 70,000 people. In other NATO countries demonstrations were equally large. Internationally the peace movement became the major social protest movement of the post-war era, involving trade unions and members of all political parties. The nuclear issue was discussed at the Church of England Synod in 1983, in the form of 'The Church and the Bomb Report'. Against this background peace movement news became a significant quantitative category on television news. The movement found itself on the news agenda. Peace movement events tended to be large and spectacular, and thus attractive to routine journalistic newsvalues. It was as a spectacular protest lobby that the anti-nuclear movement most frequently made news. 42 of the 54 items recorded over the routine sample period reported demonstrations and other forms of peace movement protest[3].

It was not uncommon during this period for peace movement events to command headlines. The demonstrations of Easter 1983 headlined coverage on the day they took place.

It was, said the organisers, the most moving and successful demonstration of all time in Britain. (1 2100 1/4/83)

Supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament started to pack up and leave Berkshire tonight after their mass demonstration against three key nuclear installations. CND say it was the most moving and hugely successful protest Britain has ever seen. (3 2200 1/4/83) [full texts of the Easter 83 coverage are laid out, with photographs, in Appendix 6.1]

The CND rally of October 22nd 1983 was the largest political demonstration ever held in Britain, with reliable estimates of 400,000 in attendance. It received headline coverage on main news bulletins for most of that day[4].

On the other hand, some large-scale peace movement events have been given surprisingly little coverage. Such an event was the American 'freeze' movement rally in New York on June 12th, 1982. BBC news reported that "it was billed as the biggest ever rally in the history of the United States. With the final figures not yet in it's hard to know if it's achieved that, but it is huge"(1 2115 12/6/82). On June 13th BBC reported that the protest had ended with "a gathering of half a million people in Central Park"(1 1330 13/6/82). The next day BBC's estimate of the numbers in attendance doubled: "almost a million people marched through the city"(2 1900 14/6/82).

Despite the unprecedented size of this event it was not reported by ITN on any of its bulletins.

Coverage of peace movement demonstrations tended to reflect their generally non-violent, good-humoured character. BBC described a CND rally at Hyde Park in 1982 in the

following terms.

Peace songs, more than twenty years old were learned by a new generation of protesters. The well-known [over a shot of GLC leader Ken Livingstone] and the not-so-well-known were there, thousands of them, a mixture of carnival and crusade. Three separate marches snaking through London en route for Hyde Park. A token counter-demonstration was noticed but politely ignored by the marchers.(1 1730 6/6/82)

Coverage of the American 'freeze' movement rally in New York in June 1982 was prefaced with the comment that "New York loves a parade".

And this was a parade. Led by some spectacular street theatre, masks, costumes, floats and streamers and the symbols of peace on stilts... It's a peaceful demonstration, downright good-humoured, and has taken this city over.(1 2115 12/6/82)

In coverage of the events of Easter 1983 journalists spoke of "the carnival spirit of the day".

There were demonstrators of all ages and a variety of life-styles. They were united by their opposition to nuclear weapons. For some it was clearly a family outing and even members of the women's peace camp seemed in a holiday mood as they enjoyed a joke at the hands of the police.

The serious point of the demonstration didn't prevent most of those taking part from having a good time. (1 2100 1/4/83)

Of course, not all peace movement protests are, or could be represented as 'carnival'. Many involve much smaller numbers of people engaging in forms of civil disobedience and minor lawbreaking such as the blockading of nuclear bases, 'die-ins' and vigils. In June 1982 women peace activists "held what they called a 'die-in' outside the Stock Exchange

in London"(1 1740 6/6/82). It was reported that the early morning rushhour had been disrupted and that several arrests had been made, but "a number of people on their way to work helped to drag off some of the protesters". During the sample period television news frequently reported events at the Greenham Common peace camp[5], such as that on May 12th 1983 when Newbury District Council successfully evicted the peace campers and confiscated their property to pay for legal costs.

Police and baillifs fought with women peace protesters today. The fighting broke out when the baillifs tried to seize cars and property to pay for the High Court eviction order... the peace women swarmed over the vehicles.(3 2200 12/5/83)

That same day, a protest of another kind took place in Berlin, scene of the 1983 European Nuclear Disarmament (END) conference. Four delegates to the conference from the west German Green Party (all members of the West German Parliament) crossed from East to West Berlin, erected a 'Sword into Ploughshares' flag, and were arrested by East German police. They were detained for four hours and then returned to West Berlin. Main evening bulletins reported the incident , intended as a protest against the attitudes of Warsaw Pact authorities to their own, 'unofficial' peace movements.

Peace movement news, then, is primarily about spectacle, but it is not simply a question of the numbers involved in protest which attracts the journalists to these events and defines them as newsworthy. Some demonstrations, like that of Easter 1983, receive more coverage than others despite the

fact that less people have participated. Clearly, if 70,000 people turn out to form a human chain on a cold weekday this may have more newsvalue than the fact that 250,000 turn out to march on a warm summer weekend. Numbers gain newsvalue in particular contexts, combining with the form of the protest to constitute 'the event'. The Easter demonstrations were spectacular and made good pictures. Likewise, the blockades of Greenham Common by a few hundred women made news across the world. Indeed, it was through their exposure in the mass media that the relatively small-scale Greenham Common protests were made into international foci for the disarmament lobby. These too were spectacular events, but their newsworthiness went beyond 'the event' itself. The newsworthiness of the peace movement during the sample period also related to the political environment in which they took place, and the reactions they engendered in high places.

The reactions of officialdom to social protest (of whatever kind) are a part of what has made the peace movement 'news'. Political elites - the primary definers of news - have a privileged access to the media. But this can sometimes prove to be a double-edged sword. By defining 'problems' in the media opinion-leaders contribute to creating them as media issues. They put in motion a process of agenda-setting which, while reflecting the media's structural relationship to dominant groups, also creates a space for oppositional views to be heard. Connell suggests that the range of definitions of issues which appear in the news is determined in "the struggle between contending political and economic forces"(1980, p144). The British Government began in the

early 1980s to show that it regarded the peace movement - CND and the Greenham Common women in particular - as a serious contender in the political struggle surrounding defence policy. As it did so the movement became news to an extent that might not otherwise have been the case.

Michael Heseltine's suggestion in 1983 for an anti-CND advertising campaign funded by public money and costing £1 million, condemned at the time by Labour and Alliance Members of Parliament as an abuse of Government's power and subsequently shelved, unwittingly gave CND headline publicity on television news. We might express the relation between the political establishment and CND's public profile - 'Heseltine's Law', as it were - in the following way: as key figures in the Government publicly condemned the peace movement the more newsworthy it became. Hall et al note that:

if the tendency towards ideological closure [in news media] is maintained by the way the different apparatuses are structurally linked so as to promote the dominant definitions of events, then the counter-tendency must also depend on the existence of organised and articulate sources which generate counter-definitions of the situation. This depends to some degree on whether the collectivity which generates counter-ideologies and explanations is a powerful counter-vailing force in society; whether it represents an organised majority or substantial minority; and whether or not it has a degree of legitimacy within the system or can win such a position through struggle (1978, p64).

In the defence and disarmament debate CND had won a position of limited legitimacy as "an organised and articulate source" of opposition to dominant definitions of defence and disarmament issues. It had become a "powerful, countervailing force in society".

This was reflected not just in the appearance of peace movement news as a quantitative content category but in reportage which spoke directly of the seriousness, commitment, and political weight of the movement. In coverage of the Easter 1983 demos ITN spoke of "the challenge it posed to the Government"(3 2200 1/4/83); and "the seriousness of the issues". One journalist conceded that "critics might argue with their viewpoint, but surely not with their commitment", adding, "the sheer size of the rally will give added weight to those who are opposing the siting of new American missiles, not only in Britain but anywhere in Europe". BBC's coverage spoke of "the serious point of the demonstrations"(1 2100 1/4/83).

During the Second Special Session of the United Nations on Disarmament, BBC coverage of a demonstration involving several hundred people at the New York diplomatic missions of the five nuclear-armed UN members stressed that this was a "serious political protest and many of the people taking part will be back to try again just as soon as they are at liberty to do so"(1 1740 14/6/82)[6].

The presence of the peace movement on the news agenda in the early 1980s was also reflected in coverage of the 1983 General Election. In some 55 items of coverage of the defence debate in the election three were concerned with the participation of CND.

Although it did much to raise the nuclear debate to the status of a major national issue, and thus contributed to creating the conditions in which the 1983 election was

fought, the British peace movement did not participate in the campaign directly. CND did not put candidates forward for election to Parliament but continued to act as a pressure group on the main participants, the political parties. CND's main strategy was to mobilise support for those candidates who most reflected the demands of the peace movement, as Newsnight on May 10th reported.

Journalist: The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament mean of course to play an active part in the election... but say they'll do no more than guide people how to vote.

Bruce Kent: We'll be saying to people, vote for the candidate who in your opinion is going to do the most for disarmament. The choice is up to the voter, not us.(2 Newsnight 10/5/83)

Peace movement tactics mainly comprised non-violent demonstrations. Specifically for the election they developed their own form of door-to-door canvassing - the Peace Canvass. CND's budget for the campaign was £30,000, a tiny fraction of the funds at the disposal of the main political parties but the movement's perceived potential to influence the result of the election nevertheless concerned some establishment commentators enough for them to cry 'foul'. The Times editorial of May 14th complained that

the planners of CND are concocting a whole range of obstructive, possibly illegal, and certainly discriminating tactics with which to pursue their campaign... There is nothing more arrogant than the pressure group which believes that it is entitled to use any means to achieve its ends.

One item concerned this controversy, reporting that the Defence Secretary "can't stop CND campaigning but he is complaining about the way they do it"(2 Newsnight 18/5/83).

candidates warning them that they were the targets of a centrally-coordinated 'hard left' assault on their seats. Conservative MPs in marginal seats accused the CND "of giving advice on election campaign tactics that went well beyond the activities of pressure groups to which we have all become accustomed". One Conservative candidate, Ray Whitney MP, warned on television news:

Let the whole British electorate understand by the 9th of June that there is this new party, this new element in British politics.(2 Newsnight 18/5/83)

Newsnight's item on May 18th reported statements by Michael Heseltine, Ray Whitney and Bruce Kent. CND were followed 'on the campaign trail' to the marginal constituency of Cambridgeshire, where the journalist concluded by noting the counterproductive impact of Conservative propaganda on CND's fortunes.

What effect CND has on the vote has yet to be seen but the continuing attacks on them by Michael Heseltine has helped CND in its aim to make sure nuclear weapons remain a major election issue.

A third CND/election item reported a public debate in Manchester on June 2nd, where "tonight, for the first time in this election campaign standard bearers from both sides of the nuclear debate have confronted each other in public"(BBC2 Newsnight 2/6/83). The item presented a debate between Bruce Kent and Winston Churchill MP, described as "the champion of the Tories' multilateralist policies", ending with the observation that "the mood, and perhaps sadly the message of the evening was that despite for once meeting and discussing

During the sample examined here, television news reported the peace movement. The various elements of a spectacular protest movement - CND, the Greenham Common women, the American freeze movement and others - were regularly covered. Indeed, the quantity and quality of coverage was such that some identified a media 'bias' in favour of the anti-nuclear viewpoint.

Peace movement news in the British media as a whole was held to be responsible for what Roy Dean, Director of the Arms Control and disarmament Research Unit at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, identified as "a loss of confidence in governments' security policies and feelings of frustration at the slow progress in the reduction of armaments by negotiation"(1983). Dean observed that:

There has been widespread media coverage of rallies in Western cities against nuclear weapons; these are portrayed as popular manifestations of opposition to the defence policies of Western governments. In Britain, for example, the activities of the anti-nuclear campaigners have been reported as domestic news items, with no assessments of their arguments and naturally no attempt to relate their activities to the current nuclear arms control talks.

One prominent broadcaster, Sir Alistair Burnett of ITN, argued that the organisation of large-scale demonstrations was a publicity tactic designed to manipulate the mass media, and gave his own view that as such they should not be given "automatic credence and coverage". On February 3rd 1984 Sir Alistair wrote to a critical viewer on the subject of news coverage of political demonstrations.

many demonstrations are organised simply to attract the attention of the media, without adding anything to the basic discussion of the issues. In the past television gave almost automatic credence and coverage, and this merely encouraged even more demonstrations. Now we try to be more discriminating in news programmes which attempt to give a balance of subjects for a wide variety of viewers.

On February 15th 1984, he added in a further letter that:

stage managed demonstrations which do not add to the debate of ideas may well be of interest to the organisers, but are going to be looked at with increasing care by the media. Some viewers and readers are getting restless about the uncritical coverage of such demonstrations.

Television news coverage has so some extent been "uncritical" of the peace movement[7]. The pattern of coverage in our sample supports Connell's assertion that "while it can by no means be said that the media have operated as an advertising agency for CND and the other organised peace movements, neither have they operated explicitly and systematically against them"(1982, p.31). However, coverage of the peace movement cannot be seen in isolation from the broadcasters' tendency to reinforce the core assumptions of the Soviet threat. The two phenomena are frequently linked both by the defence establishment, as we will see in the next section, and by journalists themselves, as in the example from 1981 to which we previously referred .

The peace rallies have delighted Moscow because they are seriously undermining the resolve of the West German Government to have the NATO missiles on their soil. And it's speculated the Soviets might try to spin out the Geneva talks in the hope that NATO plans for new missiles could fall apart under democratic pressure. And then Russia wouldn't have to give up any of her missiles at all.(3 2200 18/11/81)

Furthermore, as Dean observes there has been very little

"assessment of their arguments" within peace movement news. we will not suggest that this is not a consequence of 'bias' against the peace movement but rather of the grammar of television news, which tends to emphasise the spectacular aspects of events at the expense of explanatory themes. Essentially descriptive, peace movement news signals the existence of dissent but rarely develops the arguments put forward by the movement. Consequently, coverage has signified the existence of popular dissent from dominant views on the defence issue, but there has been little examination of the rationale which underlies it. From the context of his remarks quoted above it would appear that Dean regards this as a kind of media 'favouritism', but from another perspective it could be seen as an inadequacy in coverage.

Background explanatory items are not completely absent from television news coverage of the peace movement, but they are largely confined to minority audience programming[8].

A third reason why the appearance of the peace movement on television news cannot be equated with a pro-peace movement 'bias' relates to the privileged access enjoyed by dominant groups to counter the movement's media-presence with 'counter-propaganda' of their own. Through skilful news management, and because of the media's structured relationship to the powerful, dominant groups have the capacity to 'frame' images of the peace movement with countering images. The importance of this privileged access, and the degree to which political elites have used it to counter the peace movement's media presence with images of

the device which can be seen in coverage of the
demonstrations of Easter 1983.

The following discussion chiefly refers to evening bulletins on BBC1 (9 O' Clock News) and ITV (News at Ten) between March 30th and April 1st. The texts of these items with an outline of the accompanying visuals are reproduced in Appendix 6.1.

As we noted in the introduction to this chapter, Easter 1983 was the occasion of a major British peace movement protest, focussed on the nuclear establishments at Burghfield, Aldermaston and Greenham Common. The first day of the protest, March 31st, involved the blockading of the Burghfield factory and Greenham Common air base. These blockades were the prelude to a larger event planned for April 1st, a 'human chain' linking CND supporters by hand along a 14 mile route between the three nuclear establishments. Reported estimates of the numbers of people who took part in the human chain varied from 40,000 (the police) to 100,000 (CND). A later figure of 70,000 was generally accepted.

These demonstrations were one of the major peace movement events of recent years. Numerically larger demonstrations may have occurred before and after these protests, but this particular event took on a special significance which outweighed the numbers factor. Although it was not known then, the General Election was just over two months away. It was known by all that Cruise missiles would be coming to Britain that year. for these reasons Easter 1983 represented an important stage in the battle between the pro and anti-nuclear lobbies in Britain for the hearts and minds of public

opinion.

Coverage of the demonstrations was discussed in the previous section. We noted that they were reported prominently in bulletins (the second item on March 31st, and headline coverage on April 1st); that correspondents reported the event in terms of the 'commitment' of the protesters, the 'seriousness' of the issues, and the 'carnival', 'holiday mood' of the events. Of greater interest in this section is the manner in which the actions of the British and American governments in response to these events, while confirming that the European peace movements were regarded at that time by NATO leaders as a major political threat, shaped coverage over the Easter weekend. In a two-pronged "counter-propaganda" assault Western leaders attempted to contrast their own flexibility and sincerity - in the shape of a new arms proposal, unveiled as a major compromise - with harsh, threatening images of the USSR, particularly the images of 'Russian spies' and the Berlin Wall.

There were three stages in the campaign. First, on the eve of the demonstrations, a major US arms control proposal was announced (the Interim Zero Option of March 30th). Second, the British Government chose the first day of the Easter demonstrations, March 31st, to expel three Soviet diplomats from the London embassy on charges of spying. And third, also on March 31st, the Defence Secretary paid an official visit to the Berlin Wall, drawing attention to the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe. With the full resources of the British and American governments behind them, these three events competed

with the peace protests for newstime.

Over the three days of the sample period as a whole, there were 74 reported statements on main evening bulletins (see table 6.2). 46 of these came from official Western sources: statements by President Reagan were reported 12 times, as were those of Michael Heseltine, the Defence Secretary. Next in frequency of access came the Prime Minister, with 9 reported statements, and there were a further 13 statements from other official Western sources.

By contrast there were three reported statements from Soviet sources, and 22 from representatives or supporters of CND (a full list of reported statements is produced in Appendix 6.2).

The 'interim' Zero Option, President Reagan's main contribution to the Easter counter-propaganda battle with the European peace movement, was announced on March 30th, the day before the peace movement protests were scheduled to begin. According to NATO Secretary-General Joseph Luns in the Times this timing was "not unconnected" with the Easter demonstrations. As with the earlier proposal of November 1981, satellite communications broadcast the President's speech to Western Europe in time for the main news programmes, and it received headline coverage on main news bulletins that evening.

Viewers of ITN were informed that the President had "offered a compromise to the Soviet Union today on nuclear weapons in Europe"(3 2200 30/3/83). BBC reported that "zero-zero remains the ultimate objective - no medium-range

missiles at all on either side, but the President's message today was that he'd be willing to settle for what he could get rather than end up with no agreement at all"(1 2100 30/3/83). ITN's correspondent defined the 'meaning' of the Reagan speech in the following terms:

President Reagan's speech means that the American negotiator has been let off the leash of the Zero Option and will have much more flexible ideas to discuss.

The flexibility of the proposal was questionable, however. It adhered to the basic principles, if not the detail of the original Zero Option. Where the latter had proposed (see previous chapter) that the USSR give up all of its existing medium range nuclear weapons in Europe in return for no future deployment of American Cruise and Pershing II missiles the new proposal suggested a reduced deployment of 300 or so new American weapons in return for the removal of 300 or so Soviet ones. It "did not change the essence of US policy in any significant respect"(Talbott, 1985, p181).

Given the continued exclusion of British, French and US forward based systems from the European nuclear balance many commentators argued that its main function, like the Zero Option before it, was not to achieve an arms control agreement with the USSR but to create a positive image of the Reagan Administration's arms control policy on the eve of what were anticipated to be major anti-nuclear protests throughout Western Europe.

Indeed, journalists reported the 'public relations' dimension of the proposal.

Table 6.2Reported Statements in defence and disarmament news, Easter 1983.

	BBC	ITN	Total
Prime Minister	4	5	9
Defence Secretary	6	6	12
President Reagan	5	7	12
The Americans/ America	2	3	5
Foreign Office	1	2	3
Foreign Secretary		1	1
European leaders/ Western governments	1	1	2
CND	10	12	22
Michael Foot(Labour)	1		1
Burghfield Workers	2		2
Police	3	1	4
Moscow/Soviet commentators	2	1	3
	--	--	--
	37	37	74

correspondent, was "European public opinion, an attempt to convince the Europeans of the flexibility of America's position". ITN reported that the proposal was "very much a gesture towards Europe". BBC suggested that "the Americans are still giving nothing on some important points... the compromise, such as it is, is a fairly unyielding one and designed to impress the Europeans rather than the Russians in the first place". ITN predicted that "Russia is certain to find little that's acceptable in the proposal".

Fourteen statements in favour of the proposal were reported. These included lengthy excerpts from President Reagan's speech, journalists' own accounts of the speech, and the views of numerous official sources. "Western governments, including Britain, welcomed the proposal", reported BBC. "The Foreign Office urges the Russians to consider the offer with the utmost seriousness and to respond positively". "The Foreign Secretary", reported ITN, "said the American offer had Britain's whole-hearted support".

'Balancing' the fourteen reported statements in favour of the proposal, only two critical opinions were reported. Both of these came at the end of ITN's item. The sources for these critical comments were Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND, and commentators on the Soviet newspaper Izvestia, reported together at the end.

Monsignor Bruce Kent, the CND Chairman, said Russia was unlikely to accept the Reagan plan as a serious starting point for negotiations. He said it gave a distorted view of the European nuclear balance because it concentrated on land-based missiles. There's no official Russian reaction yet, but a commentary on the plan in the

it. Izvestia said President Reagan was engaged in farce while trying to appear flexible.

BBC news reported no critical comments.

In the next two days of coverage a further three critical statements were reported: two of these were by Soviet sources, and one came from the Chairperson of CND, Joan Ruddock. Over the three days of the sample as a whole a total of 24 statements about the Interim Zero Option were reported, of which 19 were favourable.

While definitions of the proposal as flexible and compromising were contested at times, by journalists themselves and CND or Soviet sources, the Interim Zero Option pre-empted coverage of the Easter demonstrations with headline coverage of a President 'deeply-disappointed' at the Soviet rejection of the original Zero Option, but "willing to settle for what he can get rather than end up with no agreement at all".

The Administration's ability to shape coverage in this way at a key moment in the propaganda war with the European peace movement is a consequence of the media's structured relationship to dominant groups - a relationship which permits official views to command headlines and score relatively easy propaganda points.

The British Government entered the propaganda war on March 31st, the first day of the peace movement protests, choosing that day to expel three Soviet diplomats from the London Embassy for 'activities incompatible with status'. At the

troops on the border between East and West Germany, on what was openly declared to be an "Easter counter-propaganda exercise". The effect of these interventions on the structure of news that evening can be seen in the following headlines from BBC1's main bulletin.

Three Russians expelled from Britain tonight for spying.

Thousands of peace campaigners gather in what they call Nuclear Valley.

Mr. Heseltine says our missiles keep the Soviets behind the Wall.

ITN's bulletin was structured in exactly the same way, with news about the peace movement sandwiched between officially-sponsored images of the Soviet threat.

Spies of course, are sometimes discovered working from embassies in foreign countries. But official allegations of 'activities incompatible with status' are often the justification for what are essentially political acts. In the propaganda war one side often attacks the other by making life difficult for its diplomats. Diplomatic expulsions are effective propaganda tools because reporting of the facts can be restricted on the grounds of national security. Journalists may receive little or no elaboration from their unnamed official sources of the 'crimes' allegedly committed. The events of March 31st appeared to be in this category. No information was provided by the Government to substantiate the charge that spying had taken place (at the very least, none was reported by journalists), as BBC's correspondent noted: "Whitehall has been particularly tight-lipped about

There was one reference to a possible link between the expulsions and the events going on that day in Nuclear Valley.

It seems to be more than a coincidence that the Russians are being thrown out on the very day Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heseltine are denouncing the Russians as part of their criticism of the Easter anti-nuclear demonstrations.(3 2200 31/3/83).

However, the validity of the allegations was generally taken for granted on the news. Journalists assumed the truthfulness of information from 'tight-lipped' official sources, and that spying had occurred. Reports were accompanied with 'Soviet threat' graphics depicting the Union Jack being consumed by a hammer and sickle (see figure 6.1). Statements by unnamed 'intelligence sources', such as the claim that the majority of Soviet diplomats in Britain (the figure given was 60%) were 'involved in intelligence work', were presented as 'factual' background.

In future there will be 43 Russian diplomats and 105 civilians allowed to base themselves here. Intelligence sources reckon that at least 60% of those are involved in intelligence work to a greater or lesser degree.(1 2100 31/3/83).

Items on both channels contained interviews with the individuals concerned. These proceeded from the assumption of 'guilty as charged'.

Igor Titov talked about his expulsion behind a table laid with caviar and sandwiches, sheltered by his wife and by his occupation as a journalist. His column in the Russian New Times magazine is now exposed as the cover for a spy... in addition to Mr Titov, tonight's announcement named two spies who worked at the Soviet Embassy.(3 2200 31/3/83)

Figure 6.1.



"In future there will be 43 Russian diplomats and 105 civilians allowed to base themselves here. Intelligence sources reckon that at least 60% of those are involved in intelligence work to a greater or lesser degree"(1 2100 31/3/83)

had been reported, as was apparent from journalists' accounts of what they had done. In the absence of any hard factual information, these were entirely speculative.

Mr Primakov's diplomatic title would appear to be a cover for an officer in the KGB.(3 2200 31/3/83)

This strongly suggests that British counter-intelligence has an actual list of spies, possibly provided by the Russian who defected to Britain last June from Iran.(1 2100 31/3/83)

With these images of the Soviet threat fresh in mind, viewers of both BBC and ITN bulletins were now taken to Berkshire and the CND events, but before film reports from correspondents at the scene of the demonstrations, both bulletins reported the comments of the Prime Minister - the first in a series of official statements linking the peace movement to the Soviet threat, the Berlin Wall, or both.

Mrs Thatcher has already reacted sharply to the demonstration. They'd be better off linking hands around the Berlin Wall, she said.(1 2100 31/3/83)

Mrs Thatcher agreed with the Tory backbencher who said the protesters were blinkered and dangerous even if sincere. (3 2200 31/3/83)

Film reports of the demonstrations followed, before coverage returned once again to the Prime Minister.

The demonstrations prompted some anger in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister agreed with the Conservative backbencher who called the women of Greenham Common blinkered and dangerous. (1 2100 31/3/83)

The Prime Minister told the Commons that it would make far more sense for the peace women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall. (3 2200 31/3/83)

Both bulletins broadcast the following section of Mrs

Thatcher's speech.

Thatcher: It would make far more sense for those women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall. If by doing so they managed to get the Soviets to take it down, to remove the guns, the dogs and the mines there to kill those who attempt to escape to freedom they would be doing something.

In BBC's report Mrs Thatcher continued:

If they do not succeed in taking it down they will prove that [their] freedom and the freedom of all people in this country still needs to be defended.

BBC also reported a statement by Labour Leader Michael Foot, which "defended the women saying that they believed the deployment of Cruise missiles would make arms limitation more difficult". The views of Mrs Thatcher and her Defence Secretary were reported 21 times over the sample period, but this was the only reported statement by a member of the established political opposition.

The Defence Secretary's main role in the counter-propaganda campaign was to be filmed at the Berlin Wall. Both bulletins followed reports of the Prime Minister's views on the subject of the Berlin Wall with coverage of the Defence Secretary's visit there, the purpose of which was openly declared. As Mr Heseltine put it:

It reinforces the point that we are here to defend the peace and freedom of the West. This is the point where the marching has to stop.

Outside broadcast units accompanied the Defence Secretary to Berlin, where he inspected British troops and explained to ITN's correspondent that "over there, where the real threat is, there won't be any marches". BBC's report set the scene

in the following way.

The border and wall ringing West Berlin stretches for a hundred miles, so it was here that Michael Heseltine came in what he freely acknowledged was an Easter counter-propaganda exercise. The East German border guards were out in force in their watchtowers and beside the perimeter fence. On this side it is patrolled by the men of the Royal Irish Rangers. The force here is a trip-wire, easily overwhelmed by the 95,000 Russian and East German troops based in the 20-mile ring around the city.(BBC1 2100 31/3/83)

In Chapter 3 above we noted the differential language used to describe the military forces of East and West in Berlin. Western forces 'assured and protected' the West German population against 'the Russians who ruled on the other side'. Similarly here, East German soldiers are "out in force". British soldiers are merely "patrolling". Western forces are "easily overwhelmed" by the Soviet army which is kept in check only by the "tripwire" of British forces. Over film of Heseltine inspecting the Royal Irish Rangers a correspondent noted:

Just to emphasise the nature of the enemy one of the fusiliers was sporting a Russian uniform.

Significantly, BBC2's News Review, a weekly digest of news broadcast on a Sunday, chose to highlight the same scene: "One man wore a Russian uniform to show who the real enemy was" (2 1825 3/4/83).

In these reports assumptions about the reality of the Soviet threat are built into the commentary, taken for granted not only by the conservative politicians who originate this definition of the problem, but by the journalists who are reporting the debate.

Substantial parts of these items comprised of interviews with Mr Heseltine. These were deferential, functioning mainly as cues for him to expound on his preferred themes. On BBC he was asked only one question: "what purpose had this visit served?" To which he replied:

It reinforces the point that anyone who holds my job knows. That we are here to defend the peace and freedom of the West. There's going to be a lot of protest in the West in the course of the next couple of days. There will be marching, protests, and this is the point where the marching has to stop. There won't be any protests over there, You've only got to stand here to understand why. The interesting thing is that the very success of the promises the various governments of the NATO alliance have pursued for 37 years has not only kept our freedom but has kept the freedom of the people to march and protest. That's one of the privileges of a free and democratic society.

The 'interview' ended at this point, with no attempt by the journalist to represent competing views on the themes of freedom and NATO's role in keeping it, or on any of the statements made by the Defence Secretary. On the contrary, these comments were contextualised with references to "the nature of the enemy" and Warsaw Pact troops "out in force" to "easily overwhelm" the British "tripwire".

ITN's correspondent did present Mr Heseltine with one alternative to the official view on the Cruise issue, though taking care to emphasise that it was not Mr Heseltine's underlying view of the Soviet threat being challenged, but his response to it. The interview as a whole was conducted in the same deferential style as BBC1's, but this question represents the only occasion over the three-day period when any journalist challenged Government policy.

Journalist: Now there are many people in Britain who would share your views on the Soviet system but still believe that Cruise should be opposed because they are an unnecessary addition to NATO's nuclear arsenal.

To which Mr Heseltine replied:

I'm rather closer to the Russian SS-20 missiles than the people in Britain. You see they already deployed that particular class of nuclear weapon in the Soviet Union facing us. They've got 350 missiles with over a thousand warheads, and two-thirds of them are actually facing Western Europe. What we've said is if they'll take them away we won't deploy and that would be the best option.

On this note the interview ended. Both BBC and ITN concluded their reports with coverage of the visit by Mr Heseltine to Checkpoint Charlie.

Then the Defence Secretary went to the Berlin Wall to leave flowers which he had dedicated to those who sought freedom and who died for it. (3/2200 31/3/83)

We can contrast the interviewing style adopted in both of these examples to that seen in an appearance by Joan Ruddock, CND Chairperson, on BBC2's Newsnight of March 31st. On this occasion the journalist forcefully presented the opposing side of the argument, playing 'devil's advocate' with the interviewee's position. The example illustrates that when representatives of oppositional viewpoints gain access to television news, their views tend to be presented within the terms of the debate pre-established by the primary definers of the issue. They must respond, as Hall et al put it, "to privileged definitions" of the problem (1978, p64) already established. As his starting point for the interview with Joan Ruddock the journalist chose a comment made earlier in the day by Margaret Thatcher to the effect that the women of

Journalist: Well Joan Ruddock, I'd like to ask you first about the Government remarks today about the Berlin Wall. Now, when Mrs Thatcher said it would make more sense for you to be linking hands around the Berlin Wall she argued that if you couldn't persuade the Soviets to take the Wall down that would remind you of the freedom which we enjoy, which the people behind the Wall don't enjoy, a freedom which still has to be defended. How do you reply to that argument?

Joan Ruddock: I am very conscious of the fact that people have died on the Berlin Wall, and I really feel that the Prime Minister and indeed the Minister for Defence should not be using the Berlin Wall, as I see it, in a cheap propaganda trick, because I see it as nothing more than that.[journalist attempts to interrupt] If she is to suggest that in fact we should have that sort of situation in Britain, if that is what she is saying, that we should not have the freedom to demonstrate - I can't see the point she is making. If she is saying there is a problem in Eastern Europe, that it is a divided continent then she finds an echo in our sentiments. We have always opposed the Soviet regime vis a vis Eastern Europe and indeed we want to bring back real peace and detente in Europe, and the best way to do that is through disarmament.

Although at this point in the interview Ruddock has clearly given a lengthy answer to the question about the Berlin Wall, stating that "we [CND] have always opposed the Soviet regime vis a vis Eastern Europe", the journalist presses the subject further, again putting Mrs Thatcher's views (in an expanded version of what he assumes her to have meant) about freedom, democracy and what 'the people behind the Wall are doing to menace us'.

Journalist: Her real point really, I think, is that we enjoy freedom here to debate and to demonstrate at Greenham Common and other places, the people behind the Wall do not enjoy that freedom and the people behind the Berlin Wall might want to menace our freedom and that the best way of keeping that menace at bay is by being properly defended.

A willingness to criticise and question the participants

necessary element in good journalism. But journalists appear less likely to criticise those whose views remain within the dominant explanatory framework than those who are outside it. As Schlesinger et al have noted, in television journalism "the aggressive style is most apparent when the witness is putting an alternative or oppositional view"(1983, p41). In news coverage of the nuclear debate examined here, representatives of the dominant position such as Mr Heseltine were never challenged on the news as Joan Ruddock was in the above example. Indeed, to illustrate the availability of alternative interviewing styles for representatives of the dominant viewpoint we must move temporarily out of the news format. This example, in which Mr Heseltine is interviewed critically, accompanied the screening on December 10th, 1983 of the American Broadcasting Corporation's film about a hypothetical nuclear war, The Day After.

The live studio debate which took place after The Day After was the first time Mr Heseltine had appeared as Defence Minister on the same programme as a representative of the British peace movement (again Joan Ruddock). Refusing to engage in direct debate with Ruddock he was interviewed live before the debate proper began in order, as he put it, to 'balance the film'. In the course of his interview Mr Heseltine was attacked on the grounds that he would not take part in the full debate, and for his alleged intolerance of criticism of the government's nuclear defence policy. It represents a relatively rare example of a style in which, as Schlesinger et al put it, journalists "choose the role of

a perspective which incorporates alternative or even oppositional elements"(1983, p.40).

In the first part of the interview the Defence Secretary had condemned The Day After as 'propaganda'. As the interview was nearing its end Mr Heseltine was challenged on his refusal to debate the issues with a representative of CND.

Journalist: Thankyou very much. I'm afraid that I can't help contrasting your interview with us tonight with the fact that you would not take part in the subsequent debate.

Heseltine: Well can I just answer that point? I think that that film has a message of propaganda and I think it is critically important therefore that I should have the chance to answer it, and I do not believe I would be doing that adequately if I was set in the context where I was being balanced within itself. I wanted, and I believe rightly, to balance the film.

Journalist: But I must just repeat the point: it is surely very authoritarian to suggest that it is propaganda if one questions defence policy and suggests that the present defence policy might not succeed?

Heseltine: I don't believe it is authoritarian. When I was faced with the decision that you put to me - do I think people should watch the film - I said I thought they should. Now that is encouraging debate but when the film is shown I believe there should be a real debate and that is why I asked for the opportunity to comment upon it, so there would be a balance to the discussion. If I hadn't had such a chance I believe there would have been an unbalanced discussion and I think that would be wrong and not in the highest keeping of the democratic tradition, so I thankyou for giving me the opportunity to respond.

Journalist: If somebody made a film about an international crisis in which the deterrent was a success and did work, would that be unbalanced?

Heseltine: But constantly people are, and constantly there are the opportunities to discuss these matters.

Journalist: But you don't say they're unbalanced.(The Day After Debate, ITV 10/12/83).

The style of this interview constrains the Defence

Secretary from setting the terms of the debate. His opinions of those opposing nuclear defence are referred to as "authoritarian". His use of the term "propaganda" to dismiss the ABC film is criticised. His basic assumptions about the defence issue are contested. The deferential interviewing style extended by journalists towards the Defence Secretary at Easter is here replaced with a detached, critical journalism as the journalist distances himself from the dominant interpretative framework and acknowledges the existence of a credible opposing view. There is nothing intrinsic to television news which could be seen as preventing the adoption of such styles 'routinely'.

Finally on March 31st, both bulletins reported President Reagan's views on his own anti-nuclear lobby, the American freeze movement. In a speech given in California Mr Reagan, like Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heseltine, drew links between the Soviet military build-up, Soviet nuclear superiority, and the activities of the anti-nuclear movement. Like Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heseltine, his views were not qualified. BBC's report, broadcast before the speech had actually been made, noted that:

President Reagan is expected to launch another attack on the Soviet military build-up in a speech in Los Angeles in half an hour's time. It's thought he'll criticise the nuclear freeze movement for undermining arms control negotiations.

An hour later, after the speech had been made, ITN confirmed the essence of BBC's speculation.

President Reagan attacked his own nuclear freeze movement. He said a freeze would pull the rug from under

benefit the Russians who had more nuclear weapons. If we appear to be divided, the President said, they'll dig in their heels.

On April 1st, official sources were again reported warning about the Soviet threat. Coverage of the demonstrations that day was followed on both channels by reports of a news conference by the Defence Secretary, returned from Berlin with what the BBC called "a warning for the peace movement". According to ITN:

Journalist: The Defence Secretary said the anti-nuclear demonstrators were going down a naive and reckless road. He said it would be an unforgiveable gamble for the West to do what they advocated. The Soviet Union would use force ruthlessly wherever it thought it could win.

Heseltine: So I have got the simplest of messages for those who marched today. You do so in freedom and that freedom is your right and I am charged with its defence, however much I may deplore the inconvenience and the cost you impose on the majority of us who don't share your views. But don't believe for one moment that we will risk that freedom, our freedom as well as yours, by following you along a naive and reckless road.

BBC news transmitted the same section of Mr Heseltine's statement.

This discussion has attempted to show how coverage of the peace protests of Easter 83 was 'framed' by a sequence of officially-generated stories emphasising the Soviet threat. A weekend of defence and disarmament news which had opened with a 'flexible' and 'compromising' arms control proposal from the Reagan Administration closed with images of the 'ruthless force' of the USSR and the 'naivety and recklessness' of the peace movement. This feature of coverage was not primarily a consequence of a conscious media 'bias', but of the

society.

Whether openly declared as 'counter-propaganda' (the Berlin Wall visit) or not (the diplomatic expulsions), the routine structure of access to official sources enabled them to intervene in images of 'peace' with 'balancing' images of the 'enemy'. Coverage on BBC and ITN showed a remarkable degree of uniformity in presenting this 'counter-propaganda'.

It cannot be assumed that images of the Soviet threat which dominated coverage at Easter 1983 successfully constructed a preferred reading of the peace movement protests as "at best misguided, at worst dangerous and subversive"(3 2200 1/4/83), but clearly, television news is a major arena within which official attempts to do so are organised.

We will end this chapter with a postscript. In 1984 the peace movement began to decline in newsvalue. On November 26th that year The Guardian reported that:

some papers have not mentioned CND for months. Now there is no interest in Fleet Street. CND's national conference at Sheffield was not even staffed by most national newspapers, even though the organisation is one of the most active in Britain.

Keeble notes that "since the 1983 election the peace movement has been effectively ignored by the media"(Curran et al, eds, 1986, p.56). One possible explanation for this is that 'Heseltine's Law' began to operate in reverse. Britain's political leaders apparently became aware of the relationship between their own attacks on CND and public interest in the

article further noted that:

the Defence Secretary no longer flies to the Berlin Wall to divert attention from CND demonstrations, he simply stays quiet and hopes they will not be reported.

Television coverage of one large demonstration lends some support to the view that the Conservative Government's revised strategy of ignoring CND rather than attempting to counter its activities with public relations stunts of its own (such as those discussed above) coincided with the falling away of media interest in the peace movement. On October 27th 1984 20,000 people attended a demonstration at Barrow-in-Furness to protest against the Trident submarine system (Barrow houses the Vickers shipyard where the submarines will be constructed). ITN's main evening bulletin covered the demonstration in 35 words, mainly in the context of another newsworthy story at that time, the famine in Ethiopia.

The CND leader Monsignor Bruce Kent told 20,000 demonstrators at an anti-nuclear rally in Barrow-in-Furness that the arms race was an insult when millions were starving in Ethiopia. Trident submarines are to be built at Barrow-in-Furness.(3 2215 27/10/84)

BBC1's main evening bulletin did not cover the event at all. A systematic analysis of the reasons for the declining newsworthiness of the peace movement are beyond the scope of this thesis. It does however, seem possible to conclude that the agenda-setting role of the establishment, which has contributed to making the peace movement a media issue, can also work to exclude 'peace'.

1. For discussions of peace movement news in the British press see Connell, in Aubrey (ed), 1983, and 'Portraying the Peace Movement' by Richard Keeble, in Curran et al (eds), 1986.

2. For a brief history of CND's development since the 1950s see The CND Story, (Minnion and Bolsover, eds, 1983).

3. The twelve items of peace movement news in the routine sample which were not concerned with protests of one kind or another took a range of themes, all reflecting the growth of the nuclear debate at this time. For example, in May 83, there was coverage of a dispute within the Catholic Church about attitudes to CND.

The Vatican has disowned an attack by its envoy in London against Monsignor Bruce Kent, leader of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Earlier this week Archbishop Bruno Heim accused CND members of being 'blinkerid idiots or consicously sharing Soviet ideology'. The Vatican said the Archbishop's comments were strictly personal and were without official backing. (4 1900 20/5/83)

4. Interestingly, ITN reported this event in the context of a MARPLAN poll which appeared that day in the Guardian newspaper:

Question 1. Should Britain abandon nuclear weapons no matter what other countries do or maintain our current nuclear capability, or improve it by spending more money on nuclear weapons?

	%
Abandon	16
Maintain	63
Improve	14

Question 2. Do you approve or disapprove of the government's decision to allow the Americans to base Cruise missiles on British soil?

Approve	37
Disapprove	48

Question 3. Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's decision to purchase for about £5 billion the Trident nuclear missile system to replace the Polaris fleet?

Approve	26
Disapprove	50

An opinion poll today shows that fewer than one in six supports unilateral disarmament, though just under half of those polled say they reject Cruise missiles on British soil.(3 1800 22/10/83)

Opinion polls, as all political parties know, can be interpreted to mean different things. This account could have reported that the largest proportion of those polled rejected Cruise (48%), instead of "less than half", or that the largest proportion of those polled disapproved of Trident (50%). While the journalist considers it necessary to report that "fewer than one in six" supported Britain's unilateral nuclear disarmament he fails to balance this by noting that an even smaller minority (14%) supported any increase in Britain's nuclear capability (such as the purchase of Trident), or, to put it another way, that 86% disagreed with the Government on defence.

5. For a detailed analysis of coverage of the Greenham Common protests, see War and Peace News by the Glasgow University Media Group.

6. Connell notes the use of "concessionary" terms such as "well meaning, well intentioned and idealistic" in media coverage of the October 1981 CND demonstrations (see Aubrey et al, 1982, p29.)

7. Although one example was found during the sample period of what might be called 'criticism by association'. In June 1982 ITN covered a demonstration organised by the Reagan Reception Committee to mark the President's visit to Britain. At this time the Falklands War was still being fought. Argentina was 'the enemy'. In this context the following example of linkage was significant.

The fall-out van was supposed to encourage the anti-bomb and anti-Reagan elements. Just ahead of them were supporters of Argentina over the Falklands.(3 2200 7/6/82)

The juxtaposition of "anti-bomb elements" with "supporters of Argentina over the Falklands" transfers the negative image of the latter group to the former - the peace movement, which at no time during the Falklands war supported Argentina or was linked to groups which did.

8. The END conference of May 1983 referred to above was covered in a Channel 4 news item of May 10th. Reporting that "the debate on defence and disarmament is clearly going to be one of the major issues of the election campaign" (which had been announced the previous day) the item explained the background to the conference and interviewed some of the delegates. A follow-up item examined how the nuclear theme was being reflected in the arts.

A Newsnight item of May 12th used the END conference in Berlin as the starting point for an examination of "the

city"(2 Newsnight 12/5/83). The item presented a rare account of how the peace issue is understood by unofficial and official movements in Eastern Europe.

In East Berlin the struggle for peace is inseparable from the march towards socialism. The stronger socialism is, so goes the argument, the more secure is peace. Peace therefore depends on military strength, and on conscription into a highly-politicised national army.

1 2100 30/3/83



Newscaster: The Defence Chiefs of the Soviet Union are meeting tonight in the Kremlin to give their verdict on President Reagan's new plan to limit nuclear weapons. So far there's been no official reaction but Moscow looks certain to reject the American offer. That offer was made by President Reagan this afternoon. No longer was he insisting on the Zero Option - that all Russian medium-range missiles should be withdrawn in return for cancelling the deployment of



Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe - instead he proposed a half-way stage in which the two superpowers would aim for equal numbers on both sides. From Washington Martin Bell.



Correspondent: The President summoned the ambassadors of the NATO countries to the White House, first to a briefing in the Cabinet room, then to a formal speech in the East room, but his real audience was European public opinion, an attempt to convince the Europeans of the flexibility of America's position. Zero-Zero remains the ultimate objective - no medium-range missiles at all on either side, but the President's message today was that he'd be willing to settle for what he can get rather than end up with no agreement at all.



Reagan: When it comes to intermediate nuclear missiles in Europe, it would be better to have none than to have some. But if there must be some it is better to have few than to have many. If the Soviets will not now agree to the total elimination of these weapons, I'd hope that they'd at least agree join us in an

substantially reduce these forces to equal levels on both sides. To this end Ambassador Paul Nitze has informed his Soviet counterpart that we are prepared to negotiate an interim agreement in which the United States would substantially reduce its planned deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched Cruise missiles, provided the Soviet Union reduce the number of its warheads on longer-range INF missiles to an equal level on a global basis.



Crr : And the President spoke of his confidence in success at Geneva. Afterwards there were handshakes for the NATO ambassadors but the Americans are still giving nothing on some important points, like their refusal to include British and French missiles in the total negotiating package.

And the Americans insist their Cruise and Pershing missiles are not just bargaining counters but real weapons which will be deployed in Europe by the end of the year if there's no agreement in Geneva. The compromise, such as it is, is a fairly unyielding one and designed to impress the Europeans rather than the Russians in the first place.



Nc: The proposal has been warmly welcomed tonight by Western Governments, including Britain. The Foreign Office statement says there's been the closest consultation between the allies about the idea, and it urges the Russians to consider the offer with the utmost seriousness and to respond positively.



Nc: Good evening. President Reagan offered a compromise to the Soviet Union today on nuclear missiles in Europe. In what amounted to an admission that his Zero Option isn't going to get anywhere he said he would cut the number of Cruise and Pershing missiles to be deployed in Europe if the Soviets would dismantle some of the SS-20s already in place. Each side he said would have the same number of warheads. The President at the White House said no nuclear weapons in Europe would be best. He said his offer of that, the Zero Option, was still on the table and the Soviet Union's rejection of it was a deep disappointment to him.



Reagan: But I do not intend to let this shadow that has been cast over the Geneva negotiations further darken our search for peace. When it comes to intermediate nuclear missiles in Europe, it would be better to have none than to have some. But if there must be some it is better to have few than to have many. If the Soviets will not now agree to the total elimination of these weapons, I'd hope that they'd at least agree join us in an interim agreement that would substantially reduce these forces to equal levels on both sides. To this end Ambassador Paul Nitze has informed his Soviet counterpart that we are prepared to negotiate an interim agreement in which the United States would substantially reduce its planned deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched Cruise missiles, provided the Soviet Union reduce the number of its warheads on longer-range INF missiles to an equal level on a global basis.

Nc: The President said the Soviets had launched a propaganda campaign to try to divide the America from its allies and the allies from each other. But this he said was a NATO initiative which the Allies have significantly helped to shape, and the closest possible consultation would go on.

Reagan: This process is a model for how an alliance of free and democratic nations can and must work together on critical issues. It is the source of our unity and gives us a strength that no-one

confidence in the eventual success of our efforts in Geneva to create a safer, safer world for all the earth's people. Thankyou very much.



Crr: President Reagan's speech was very much a gesture towards Europe. Many Europeans had felt America was ignoring their wishes but on this issue at least Mr Reagan took considerable trouble to consult by writing to European leaders like Mrs Thatcher. And they have all approved his new approach. European public opinion will be tested again this weekend by the size of the anti-Cruise missile demonstrations scheduled in several countries.



Russia has some 1,000 SS-20 missiles warheads in Europe and Asia and America plans to station 572 Cruise and Pershing missile warheads in Western Europe. America is still insisting that in any compromise settlement the warhead figures for each side must be equal. A figure of 300 has been speculated but Russian cuts would have to be much deeper than American ones.



America is still insisting that the equal level should be global, the sme number of American intermediate-range warheads in Europe as Russia has facing both Europe and Asia. This is because Russian SS-20s are mobile and America fears they could be easily moved from Asia to Europe.

America is also firmly rejecting Russia's demand that British and French independent missiles should be counted in the balance. They must be excluded America says. Russia is certain to find little that is acceptable in the new proposal. Mr Reagan's speech means the American negotiator has been let off the leash of the Zero Option and will have much more flexible ideas to discuss.



Nc: The Foreign Secretary Mr Pym urged the Soviet Union to consider the American offer with the utmost seriousness and respond positively when the negotiations resume in Geneva on May 17th. He said the American offer had Britain's whole-hearted support.



Monsignor Bruce Kent, the CND Chairman, said Russia was unlikely to accept the Reagan plan as a serious starting point for negotiations. He said it gave a distorted view of the European nuclear balance because it concentrated on land-based missiles.



There's no official Russian reaction yet, but a commentary on the plan in the Government newspaper Izvestia said nothing would come of it. Izvestia said President Reagan was engaged in farce while trying to appear flexible.



Ne: The British Government tonight ordered the expulsion of three Russians, apparently for spying. Two of them are diplomats, the third operates as a journalist. All three are being expelled for activities incompatible with their status, a diplomatic nicety generally assumed to mean espionage.



The most senior of the three is General Primakov on the left, the assistant air attache at the Soviet Embassy. He's been given seven days to leave. Ivanov, a second secretary, is presently out of the country and won't be allowed to return.

The third man, Igor Titov describes himself as London correspondent for a Soviet foreign policy magazine. He too has been given a week to get out of the country. Here is our diplomatic correspondent Keith Graves.



Crr: Five Soviet citizens have now been expelled in as many months. The Foreign Office doesn't actually use the word spy, they are sent packing for indulging in activities incompatible with their status, a euphemism for spying. Whitehall has been particularly tight-lipped about just what these activities were, though I understand they have nothing to do with the recent spate of recent spy cases involving amongst other places the top secret Government communications centre at Cheltenham. It is perhaps no coincidence that since the revelations of the past year about just how leaky our secret intelligence community has been, followed by outrage from Mrs Thatcher and an order to her intelligence chiefs to get their act together there has been this relatively steady stream of expulsions.



First came Caption Anatoly Zotov, a Soviet naval attache ordered out before Christmas, a jovial extrovert and a popular figure on the London diplomatic circuit. He'd been trying to recruit British service personnel he met in the

In January Vladimir Chernov, a translator with the International Wheat Council got his marching orders. It's still not clear what he'd been up to.

Colonel Primakov, the most senior on paper at least of tonight's expulsions has been here since June 1980, accompanied by his wife. Again his diplomatic title would appear to be a cover for an officer in the KGB. Igor Titov who lives with his wife and two children in West London describes himself as a correspondent for New Times, a Soviet political magazine. He has worked here before for five years in the 1970s and he came back just a year ago. His English is almost perfect and unlike the other two diplomats he is much freer to travel around the country. Last year for example he attended the major political party conferences. Tonight, sitting with his wife and children in his flat, he said that the spy allegations were outrageous nonsense.



Titov: Well I think it is absolutely ridiculous, it came to me absolutely unexpected. I really cannot know what it is about.

Crr: The Foreign Office says you have been engaging in unacceptable activities.

Titov: I am absolutely not. I have been in Germany this year. I have been here quite a while.

Crr: Have you done any spying for your Government?

Titov: Absolutely not.

Crr: Have you done any spying for anybody else?

Titov: Absolutely not.

Crr: What are you going to do about these charges?

Titov: Well we don't have any right to appeal against the decision of the Foreign Office so, well, I am actually leaving.

Crr: Well Mr Titov added that if Mrs

called provocation, that's what she'll get, he said, and he's probably right. If past form is anything to go by two British diplomats will soon be told to leave Moscow by the Kremlin. None of those accused of spying tonight will be replaced in London. Since the mass expulsion of Russians by the British Government in 1971 the ceiling of Russians allowed to work here is lowered each time one is ordered out. In future there will be 43 Russian diplomats and 105 civilians allowed to base themselves here. Intelligence sources reckon that at least 60% of those are involved in intelligence work to a greater or lesser degree.



Nc: Thousands of demonstrators are gathering tonight for what they say is the biggest peace protest Britain has ever seen. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is hoping that as many as 40,000 will join in an Easter demonstration in what they call Nuclear Valley. The protest began today with blockades of two sites.

Greenham Common where Cruise missiles will be deployed later this year and the Royal Ordnance factory at Burghfield where most of Britain's nuclear weapons are made. Tomorrow CND wants to link the two with a fourteen mile human chain that will also take in the atomic weapons research establishment at Aldermaston.

Mrs Thatcher has already reacted sharply to the demonstration. They'd be better off linking hands around the Berlin Wall she said. Peter Gould reports from Berkshire.

Crr: 6 a.m. and the blockade begins at Burghfield as demonstrators sit on the road and sing peace songs, a dawn chorus which helped one policeman stay warm. The police were on hand to ensure that the workers at the factory, which assembles nuclear warheads, were able to enter the premises freely.



Burghfield worker: I think it's a diabolical liberty that one can't get to work when one wants to, so, you know, so what reason have you of stopping a person going to work?



Crr: The demonstrators claimed that some employees did stay away today, but others were clearly determined to report for work as usual, regardless of the obstacles in their path. And for those arriving on foot quiet words of advice from the police.

Policeman: My advice would be to go in, one at a time...

Burghfield worker: You'd prefer me not to earn money, just because you're not earning money.

Crr: Fourteen miles away at Greenham Common a similar blockade was under way with members of the women's peace camps staging their now-familiar demonstration outside all seven of the entrances to the American base. By tomorrow thousands more are expected to join them.



Bruce Kent: The object is not just to mass the numbers but really to show people these Cruise missiles here and we have the research centre at Aldermaston and we have the bomb factory. This is what I call nuclear valley and we are warning people that with the first strike weapons and the first use weapons coming that this country is drifting towards nuclear war.



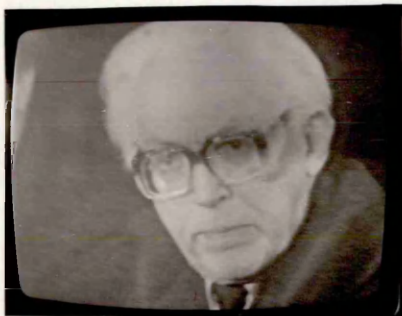
Crr: As the demonstrators gathered today police on horseback were ready to control the growing crowd. So far however there has been no arrests, although some protestors have been carried away to allow vehicles in and out of the base. And tonight hundreds more CND supporters have been converging on Greenham Common in readiness for tomorrow's human chain.



anger in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister agreed with the Conservative backbencher who called the women of Greenham Common blinkered and dangerous.



Prime Minister: It would make far more sense for those women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall. If by doing so they managed to persuade the Soviets to take it down, to remove the guns, the dogs and the mines there to kill those who attempt to escape to freedom they would be doing something. If they do not succeed in persuading the Soviets to take it down they will prove that the freedom of the Greenham Common women and the freedom of all people in this country still needs to be defended.



NC: But Labour Leader Michael Foot defended the women saying that they believed the deployment of Cruise missiles would make arms limitation more difficult. After the arguments the leader of the House John Biffen said the matter should be the subject of a full-scale debate.



Large anti-nuclear demonstrations are also expected in several West German cities over Easter. The Defence Secretary Mr Michael Heseltine who is in Berlin visiting British forces said they were the real peace campaigners in Western Europe. Our Defence Correspondent Christopher Wain reports.

Crr: The border and wall ringing West Berlin stretches for a hundred miles, so it is here that Michael Heseltine came in what he freely acknowledged was an Easter counter-propaganda exercise.



The East German border guards were out in force in their watchtowers and beside the perimeter fence. On this side it is patrolled by men of the Royal Irish Rangers. The force here is a trip-wire,

and East German troops based in the 20-mile ring around the city, so much of the training is street fighting and house clearance practised in the British Army's fighting city.



And just to emphasise the nature of the enemy one of the fusiliers was sporting a Russian uniform.

Then it was back to the Wall, laying a wreath for those who died trying to get across. And then a final view of the scene near the Brandenburg gate. What purpose had this visit served?



Michael Heseltine: It reinforces the point that anyone who holds my job knows. That we are here to defend the peace and freedom of the West. There's going to be a lot of protest in the West in the course of the next couple of days. there will be marching, protests, and this is the point where the marching has to stop. There won't be any marching or protests over there, you've only got to stand here to understand why. The interesting thing is that the very success of the promises of the various governments of the NATO Alliance have pursued for 37 years has not only kept our freedom but has kept the freedom of the people to march and protest. That's one of the privileges of a free and democratic society.



Nc: NATO has formally endorsed President Reagan's latest proposal for limiting nuclear missiles. But there is still no official reaction from the Soviet Union. Moscow has called it an old idea in a new wrapping. The Americans have suggested that the two sides have an equal number of missiles instead of insisting on their Zero Option.

The Soviet leadership has been commemorating the death of Karl Marx rather than commenting on the proposal.

plan has been criticised by Soviet commentators for excluding British and French nuclear weapons and only covering land-based missiles. The Soviet Union has said these would have to be taken into consideration in any new agreement.



President Reagan is expected to launch another attack on the Soviet military build-up in a speech in Los Angeles in half an hour's time. It's thought he'll criticise the nuclear freeze movement for undermining arms control negotiations.



Nc: Britain is expelling three more Russians for spying. Two are diplomats, the third is a journalist. The Foreign Office has told Colonel Primakov, an assistant air attache and a Mr Igor Titov, a magazine correspondent to leave the country within seven days. The other man, a Mr Sergei Ivanov, a second secretary at the Soviet Embassy is already abroad and will not be allowed to return.

Crr: This is the third time Britain has expelled Russians for spying in the last four months. The Soviet Embassy wouldn't comment tonight but Mr Titov the journalist said he thought his expulsion was an early April Fools joke and the spying allegations were absolute rubbish.

Igor Titov talked about his expulsion behind a table laid with caviar and sandwiches, sheltered by his wife and by his occupation as a journalist. It was his second tour in London as a foreign correspondent for a news magazine which gave him complete freedom to travel. His column in the Russian New Times magazine is now exposed as the cover for a spy.



Titov: It's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous because, well, you could just as well accuse anybody for anything, but to accuse a journalist for spying, I think it is absolutely ridiculous.

Crr: Why do you think the Government say that your presence in Britain is unacceptable?

Titov: Well if it is unacceptable for the Foreign Office, well I can just pack and leave, that's all.

Crr: You have seven days to leave. Do you intend to do so?

Titov: Well I will of course, and I consider the whole thing a pure political provocation on the part of the Government with Mrs Thatcher at the head of it.

Crr: Two other Soviet diplomats have been expelled at the same time for equal spying or unacceptable activities. Do you suggest that you alone are the only innocent among them?

Titov: Well the thing is I only heard it on the news, that some other, you know, had been expelled but as far as I'm concerned, and I can speak only for me, but I'm quite sure that all the people who are being spies, I don't know how many of them, as yet, but I think it's absolutely ridiculous.



Crr: So three times in four months the head of the Soviet Embassy in London has been called by the Foreign Office and told that Russians are being thrown out for spying. Five of them in all since December, which strongly suggests that British counter-intelligence has an actual list of counter-spies, possibly provided by the Russian who defected to Britain last June from the Soviet Embassy in Iran. In addition to Mr Titov, tonight's announcement named two spies who worked at the Soviet Embassy in London.

One of them, Mr Ivanov who has already left Britain and is barred from reentering was the very diplomat who proved so noncommittal when ITN reporter Keith Hatfield called at the Soviet Embassy last December in connection with another spy scandal.

Ivanov: My name is Ivanov, I am second secretary

Crr: And your first name is?

Ivanov: Ivanov.

Crr: And this is the man Keith Hatfield was inquiring after, Captain Anatoly Zotov the naval attache. Later reports said that he was trying to set up a spy ring in Britain before being expelled last December.

And in January this year, another Russian, Vladimir Chernov, who held semi-diplomatic status as a translator at the International Wheat Council was also thrown out for spying.

Now when Captain Zotov was expelled there was considerable criticism over the way the Soviet Embassy here was able to upstage the official British announcement. Well that certainly didn't happen today, and indeed it seemed to be

more than a coincidence that the Russians are being thrown out on the very day Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heseltine are denouncing the Russians as part of their criticisms of the Easter anti-nuclear demonstrations.

Nc: And CND say their Easter weekend protests which started today will be the biggest of their kind ever seen in Britain. Today they effectively prevented work at the Burghfield Royal Ordnance factory near Reading where nuclear warheads for Britain's Polaris submarines are made. Police kept open Greenham Common air base near Newbury where Cruise missiles are to be based. There were scuffles tonight as Greenham peace women tried to stop workers on the base from leaving. Tomorrow CND hopes to get 40,000 people out to form a human chain along the fourteen miles between Greenham and Burghfield by way of Aldermaston the atomic weapons research establishment. In the Commons, Mrs Thatcher agreed with the Tory backbencher who said the protestors were blinkered and dangerous even if sincere.



Crr: The demonstrations began at dawn with CND supporters blockading the gates of the warheads factory at Burghfield and the missile site at Greenham Common.

At Greenham the police soon made it clear that they were not going to allow work at the base to be disrupted. More than 200 uniformed officers using a carefully-rehearsed plan swamped the gates at the site, then opened up a route to allow through buses carrying more than 1,000 workers. The demonstrators were also shown that there was more than one way to ferry in personnel needed to keep a military base on full alert. The outwitted Greenham peace campaigners brought in reinforcements in an attempt to prevent the workers leaving the site. But again the police were there to open a way for the convoy to leave.

By contrast at the weapons factory at Burghfield only the occasional worker chose to run the gauntlet and the plant was effectively closed for the day. This is one of the few who got in. CND described their day as a triumph and aware that the eyes of the world were on them had this to say about President



Joan Ruddock: Well I think when he makes this sort of gesture he has made on talks again or on offering a new deal he is trying to head off the European peace movements. He has known as we have for a very long time that we planned these demonstrations and I think it's a way of trying to diffuse them, but he will not succeed because they are not realistic offers and they fall very far short of the demands of the peace movement, which is no nuclear weapons at all in Europe.

Crr: Tonight CND supporters continued to arrive in Berkshire for tomorrow's symbolic linking of hands in a fourteen mile human chain from the bombs factory in Burghfield to the missiles site in Greenham Common. Norman Rees, News At Ten, Berkshire.

Nc: The Prime Minister told the Commons that it would make far more sense for the peace women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall. As she spoke her Defence Secretary Mr Heseltine was at the Berlin Wall saying that was where the real peace makers were. First, Mrs Thatcher.



Prime Minister: It would make far more sense for those women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall. If by doing so they managed to persuade the Soviets to take it down, to remove the guns, the dogs and the mines there to kill those who attempt to escape to freedom they would be doing something.



Crr: The visible signs of the Soviets' control of Eastern Europe was just what Mr Heseltine had come to Berlin to see and to emphasise. East German guards studied his arrival and he peered back at them from a watchtower. He studied the dogs guarding the 100 mile-long border and then became another picture in an East German intelligence file. Mr Heseltine was visiting British troops in Berlin.



peace keepers are and I thought if I was here it would help people to see those protest marches at home in a clearer focus. You see they are free to march, to protest, over there where the real threat is there won't be any protests, there won't be any marches.

Crr: Now there are many people in Britain who would share your views on the Soviet system but still believe that Cruise should be opposed because they are an unnecessary addition to NATO's nuclear arsenal.

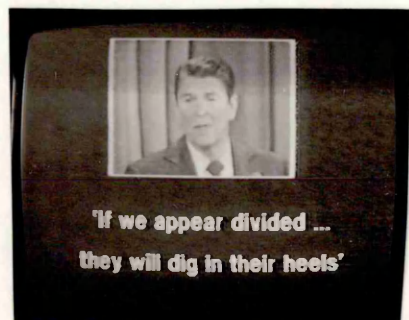
Michael Heseltine: I'm rather closer to the Russian SS-20 missiles than the people in Britain. You see they already deployed that particular class of nuclear weapon in the Soviet Union facing us. They've got 350 missiles with over a thousnad warheads, and two-thirds of them are actually facing Western Europe. What we've said is if they'll take them away we won't deploy and that would be the best option.



Crr: Then the Defence Secretary went to the Berlin Wall to leave flowers which he had dedicated to those who sought freedom and who died for it. Geoffrey Archer, News At Ten, Berlin.



Nc: President Reagan attacked his own country's nuclear freeze movement which calls for a halt in any more increases in both American and Russian weapons. He said a freeze would



pull the rug from under the American negotiators at disarmament talks and benefit the Russians who had more nuclear weapons. If we appear to be divided, the President said, they'll dig in their heels.



Nc: It was, said the organisers, the most moving and successful demonstration of all time in Britain. According to the Defence Minister Mr Heseltine it was misguided and naive. Either way tens of thousands of people stood shoulder to shoulder along what the protesters call Nuclear Valley in Berkshire. 80,000 according to CND. The police reckoned 40,000. The only incident came when nearly 200 demonstrators scaled the perimeter fence at Greenham Common air base and were stopped by the police. From Greenham the protesters stood out in a symbolic human chain for fourteen miles past Aldermaston and on to the nuclear weapons factory at Burghfield. Peter Goulde reports.

Crr: They came to Berkshire in their thousands, as army of CND supporters from all over Britain. They quickly filled the narrow country roads leading to the nuclear bases. Most arrived in fleets of coaches and all of them were convinced of the value of their protests.



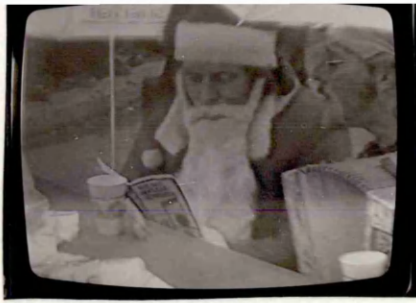
Protestor: It will achieve national and I hope world-wide press, and I hope that we can put our points of view forward.



Protestor: We are going into a new lunatic age and somebody has to stand up and be counted and I thought I must be there to be counted with them.



Crr: There were demonstrators of all ages



united by their opposition to nuclear weapons. For some it was clearly a family outing and even members of the women's peace camp seemed in a holiday mood as they enjoyed a joke at the expense of the police.

But the mood became more serious with the formation of the human chain in what's become known as nuclear valley. It stretched fourteen miles from Greenham Common to the weapons factory at Burghfield and also included the Aldermaston research centre.

The symbolic joining of hands was the reason they'd come here and the line was unbroken.

But up above, someone clearly had doubts about the exercise.



One thing was certain. This demonstration was being reported around the world.

And at Greenham Common, women protestors picked this moment to try to break through the main gate and by sheer weight of numbers they nearly succeeded. Some were able to climb over the security fence despite the barbed wire but they didn't get very far on the other side. 187 women were arrested and after being caught they were escorted off the premises.

But there was no trouble anywhere else, and the serious point of the demonstration didn't prevent most of those taking part from having a good time.



The day came to a peaceful end when many of those who'd formed the human chain gathered for a rally near Aldermaston. The police estimated that 40,000 people took part in today's demonstrations but CND disagreed. Their estimates varied but they thought the real figure was nearer 100,000 and they were satisfied because they had been able to complete their symbolic human chain. Whatever the exact figures their General Secretary Monsignor Bruce Kent was delighted with the turn out. It was one of the largest

ever held in this country and it was peaceful.



Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police: Oh I am delighted with the way things have gone over the last few days. We achieved what we set out to do. I think it's been a very peaceful organisation. We haven't had any need whatsoever to recourse to mass arrest. We have achieved our intentions, we have achieved it peacefully, yes I'm very satisfied.

Crr: And for this evening the only problem seemed to be finding a bus home. Some of today's demonstrators will be on their way north tonight, heading for the peace rallies to be held in Glasgow and Faslane during the weekend.

Nc: In West Germany four days of peace demonstrations have started. About 15,000 people took part in anti-nuclear marches to protest about the siting of American Cruise and Pershing missiles. From Germany our Defence Correspondent Christopher Wain reports.

Crr: About a thousand demonstrators from Hamburg arrived in the sleepy village of Kelighusen soon after midday. Then they set out for a nearby barracks.



Lilakronkazerna is at first sight is a perfectly ordinary German camp standing just outside the village but according to the protestors just behind the fence 70 American GIs are guarding warheads for tactical nuclear weapons. So this Easter this is one of the places on the list for blockade.

At Kelighusen the mood was good humoured. The problem will come when the gates need to be opened and the singing has to stop.

Nc: In Bavaria there was trouble outside another American Army camp believed by demonstrators to be earmarked for Pershing II rockets. Police carried away 100 demonstrators, but there were scuffles when one was bitten by a police dog. The police sprayed disabling fluid on the crowd to force them back.



The Defence Secretary Mr Michael Heseltine, just back from Berlin, called today's demonstrations naive and had a

· warning for the peace movement.

Michael Heseltine: So I have got the simplest of messages for those who marched today. You do so in freedom and that freedom is your right and I am charged with its defence, however much I may deplore the inconvenience and the cost you impose on the majority of us who don't share your views. But don't believe for one moment that we will risk that freedom, our freedom as well as yours, by following you along a naive and reckless road.



Nc: Supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament started to pack up and leave Berkshire tonight after their mass demonstration against three key nuclear installations. CND say it was the most moving and hugely successful protest Britain has seen with 80,000 men, women and children joining in. Police say the figure was nearer 40,000.

The campaigners lined the 14 mile way from Greenham Common air base which is being prepared for Cruise missiles to the Royal Ordnance factory at Burghfield where nuclear warheads for Britain's Polaris submarines are made.



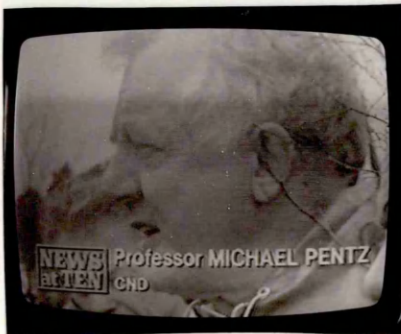
Crr: The turnout exceeded all expectations. From early morning roads leading to Berkshire's so-called nuclear valley filled with coaches bringing peace campaigners from all over the country. It was one of the most ambitious demonstrations CND had organised and officials were angry at the Government's attempts to denigrate it.



Michael Pentz: Last night Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heseltine hit, unbelievable as it may seem, a new low, a low of trivialising the issue that is bringing thousands of people on to this damp common and on these damp streets today. I think that their use of the propaganda stunt of the Berlin Wall was hypocritical, cowardly and cheapjack.

Crr: At Greenham Common the blockade of the air base continued. Some militant women campaigners succeeded once again in scaling the perimeter fence.

All together 187 people were detained for trespassing during the day by Ministry of Defence security guards.



Along the 14 mile route between Greenham and Burghfield there was often confusion. Some demonstrators abandoned their position early thinking the link-up was already over. CND stewards asked them to return.

in the carnival spirit of the day it hardly seemed to matter. Then, just after 2 O'clock officials reckoned the human chain was complete. Tens of thousands of people had turned out, often the roads were lined on both sides and the mood was euphoric. It's doubtful though that the organisers achieved their full objective of one single, coherent link-up. But the symbolic gesture had been fully made. Weapons factory, nuclear research establishment and missile bases were joined together by a chain of people committed to the removal of them all.

For the demonstrators it was a long day. They had travelled all night to get here. Critics might argue with their viewpoint, but surely not with their commitment.



Protestor: We're ordinary British people who feel strongly that we want a peaceful future, and we're not going to get it with nuclear weapons on our territories.



Protestor: Well we hope that it'll make people think about the nuclear weapons issue more seriously perhaps than some of them have done so far.

Protestor: To show exactly what we feel about these nuclear weapons, and why we're here, and that's why I'm here, and my daughter, because I want a tomorrow's world for her. It's quite simple.

Crr: Mrs Thatcher says you should be linking arms around the Berlin Wall rather than here.

Protestor: Mrs Thatcher should be doing something for peace instead of telling us what we should be doing. What's she done for peace?

Crr: The demonstration ended with a rally on Padworth common, close to Aldermaston. CND leaders were clearly delighted with

to the Government.



Joan Ruddock: This has been the most moving, imaginative and I think hugely successful demonstration of all time in Britain. We have demonstrated again that we oppose the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the deployment of nuclear weapons, and research into any future nuclear weapons. We will have none of it.

Crr: If nothing else the demonstration brought a touch of colour and humour to the Berkshire countryside today, but that did little to obscure the seriousness of the issues. Mrs Thatcher has made no secret of her distaste for this weekend's protests, nor her belief, shared by President Reagan, that these people are at best misguided, at worst dangerous and subversive. The Prime Minister was herself the target of many demonstrators today who said the movement was too strong to be ignored. And the sheer size of the rally will give added weight to those who are opposed to the siting of new American missiles, not only in Britain, but anywhere in Europe. Norman Rees, News At Ten at the CND rally in Berkshire.



Nc: The Defence Secretary Mr Michael Heseltine who's just returned from a visit to the Berlin Wall said the anti-nuclear demonstrators were going down a naive and reckless road. He said it would be an unforgiveable gamble for the West to do what they advocated. The Soviet Union would use force ruthlessly where it thought it could win.



Michael Heseltine: So I have got the simplest of messages for those who marched today. You do so in freedom and that freedom is your right and I am charged with its defence, however much I may deplore the inconvenience and the cost you impose on the majority of us who don't share your views. But don't believe for one moment that we will risk that freedom, our freedom as well as yours, by following you along a naive and reckless road.

anti-nuclear and peace demonstrations today.



There were scuffles at an American base at Neu-Ulm in the South, one of the fifteen bases being blockaded.

Two demonstrators were hurt. One was bitten by a police dog as police cleared the main gate. Tear gas was fired and one woman was arrested.

Appendix 6.2 Reported statements in defence and disarmament news, Easter 1983.

On the Peace Movement

The Prime Minister

- 1) Mrs Thatcher has already reacted sharply to the demonstration. They'd be better off linking hands around the Berlin Wall she said.(1 2100 31/3/83)
- 2) The Prime Minister agreed with the Conservative backbencher who called the women of Greenham Common blinkered and dangerous.(1 2100 31/3/83)
- 3) Prime Minister: It would make far more sense for those women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall. If by doing so they managed to persuade the Soviets to take it down, to remove the guns, the dogs and the mines there to kill those who attempt to escape to freedom they would be doing something. If they do not succeed in persuading the Soviets to take it down they will prove that the freedom of the Greenham Common women and the freedom of all people in this country still needs to be defended.(1 2100 31/3/83)
- 4) Mrs Thatcher agreed with the Tory backbencher who said the protestors were blinkered and dangerous even if sincere.(3 2200 31/3/83)
- 5) The Prime Minister told the Commons that it would make far more sense for the peace women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall.(3 2200 31/3/83)
- 6) Prime Minister: It would make far more sense for those women to go and link hands around the Berlin Wall. If by doing so they managed to persuade the Soviets to take it down, to remove the guns, the dogs and the mines there to kill those who attempt to escape to freedom they would be doing something.(3 2200 31/3/83)
- 7) Mrs Thatcher says [the protesters] should be linking arms around the Berlin Wall rather than here.(3 2200 1/4/83)
- 8) Mrs Thatcher has made no secret of her distaste for this weekend's protests, nor her belief that these people are at best misguided, at worst dangerous and subversive.(3 2200 1/4/83)

The Defence Secretary

- 1) The Defence Secretary Mr Michael Heseltine who is in Berlin visiting British forces said they were the real peace campaigners in Western Europe.(1 2100 31/3/83)
- 2) Michael Heseltine freely acknowledged [his visit to the Berlin Wall] was an Easter counter-propaganda exercise.(1 2100 31/3/83)
- 3) Michael Heseltine: [the visit] reinforces the point

defend the peace and freedom of the West. There's going to be a lot of protest in the West in the course of the next couple of days. There will be marching, protests, and this is the point where the marching has to stop. There won't be any marching or protests over there, you've only got to stand here to understand why. The interesting thing is that the very success of the promises of the various governments of the NATO Alliance have pursued for 37 years has not only kept our freedom but has kept the freedom of the people to march and protest. That's one of the privileges of a free and democratic society.(1 2100 31/3/83)

4) According to the Defence Minister Mr Michael Heseltine, [the demonstration] was naive and misguided.(1 2100 1/4/83)

5) The Defence Secretary Mr Michael Heseltine, just back from Berlin, called today's demonstrations naive and had a warning for the peace movement.(1 2100 11/4/83)

6) Michael Heseltine: So I have got the simplest of messages for those who marched today. You do so in freedom and that freedom is your right and I am charged with its defence, however much I may deplore the inconvenience and the cost you impose on the majority of us who don't share your views. But don't believe for one moment that we will risk that freedom, our freedom as well as yours, by following you along a naive and reckless road.(1 2100 1/4/83)

7) Defence Secretary Mr Heseltine was at the Berlin Wall saying that was where the real peace makers were.(3 2200 31/3/83)

8) Michael Heseltine: This is where the real peace keepers are and I thought if I was here it would help people to see those protest marches at home in a clearer focus. You see they are free to march, to protest, over there where the real threat is there won't be any protests, there won't be any marches.(3 2200 31/3/83)

9) Michael Heseltine: I'm rather closer to the Russian SS-20 missiles than the people in Britain. You see they already deployed that particular class of nuclear weapon in the Soviet Union facing us. They've got 350 missiles with over a thousand warheads, and two-thirds of them are actually facing Western Europe. What we've said is if they'll take them away we won't deploy and that would be the best option.(3 2200 31/3/83)

10) The Defence Secretary Mr Michael Heseltine who's just returned from a visit to the Berlin Wall said the anti-nuclear demonstrators were going down a naive and reckless road. He said it would be an unforgiveable gamble for the West to do what they advocated. The Soviet Union would use force ruthlessly where it thought it could win.(3 2200 1/4/83)

11) Michael Heseltine: So I have got the simplest of messages for those who marched today. You do so in freedom and that

however much I may deplore the inconvenience and the cost you impose on the majority of us who don't share your views. But don't believe for one moment that we will risk that freedom, our freedom as well as yours, by following you along a naive and reckless road.(3 2200 1/4/83)

The Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary

1) Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heseltine are denouncing the Russians as part of their criticisms of the Easter anti-nuclear demonstrations.(3 2200 31/3/83)

President Reagan and the Prime Minister

1)President Reagan shares [the Prime Minister's belief] that these people are at best misguided, at worst dangerous and subversive.(3 2200 1/4/83)

President Reagan

1) President Reagan attacked his own country's nuclear freeze movement which calls for a halt in any more increases in both American and Russian weapons. He said a freeze would pull the rug from under the American negotiators at disarmament talks and benefit the Russians who had more nuclear weapons. If we appear to be divided, the President said, they'll dig in their heels.(3 2200 31/3/83)

3) President Reagan is expected to launch another attack on the Soviet military build-up in a speech in Los Angeles in half an hour's time. It's thought he'll criticise the nuclear freeze movement for undermining arms control negotiations.(1 2100 31/3/83)

The Police

1) The police reckoned 40,000.(1 2100 1/4/83)

2) The police estimated that 40,000 took part in today's demonstration.(1 2100 1/4/83)

3) Police say the figure was nearer 40,000.(3 2200 1/4/83)

4) Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police: Oh I am delighted with the way things have gone over the last few days. We achieved what we set out to do. I think it's been a very peaceful organisation. We haven't had any need whatsoever to recourse to mass arrest. We have achieved our intentions, we have achieved it peacefully, yes I'm very satisfied.(1 2100 1/4/83)

Burghfield workers

1) I think it's a diabolical liberty that one can't get to work when one wants to, so, you know, so what reason have you of stopping a person going to work?(1 2100 31/3/83)

2) Burghfield worker: You'd [CND] prefer me not to earn money, just because you're not earning money.(1 2100 31/3/83)

CND

1) Thousands of demonstrators say [it] is the biggest peace protest Britain has ever seen. (1 2100 31/3/83)

2) The demonstrators claimed that some employees did stay away today.(1 2100 31/3/83)

3) Bruce Kent: The object is not just to mass the numbers but really to show people these Cruise missiles here and we have the research centre at Aldermaston and we have the bomb factory. This is what I call nuclear valley and we are warning people that with the first strike weapons and the first use weapons coming that this country is drifting towards nuclear war.(1 2100 31/3/83)

4) It was, said the organisers, the most moving and hugely successful demonstration of all time in Britain.(1 2100 1/4/83)

5) 80,000, according to CND.(1 2100 1/4/83)

6) Protestor: It will achieve national and I hope world-wide press, and I hope that we can put our points of view forward.(1 2100 1/4/83)

7) Protestor: We are going into a new lunatic age and somebody has to stand up and be counted and I thought I must be there to be counted with them.(1 2100 1/4/83)

8) CND disagreed [with the police]. Their estimates varied but they thought the figure was nearer 100,000 and they were satisfied because they had been able to complete their symbolic human chain.(1 2100 1/4/83)

9) General Secretary Monsignor Bruce Kent was delighted with the turn out.(1 2100 1/4/83)

10) CND say their Easter weekend protests which started today will be the biggest of their kind ever seen in Britain.(3 2200 31/3/83)

11) CND say it was the most moving and hugely successful protest Britain has seen with 80,000 men, women and children joining in.(3 2200 1/4/83)

12) Officials were angry at the government's attempts to denigrate it.(3 2200 1/4/83)

13) Michael Pentz: Last night Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heseltine hit, unbelievable as it may seem, a new low, a low of trivialising the issue that is bringing thousands of people on to this damp common and on these damp streets today. I think that their use of the propaganda stunt of the Berlin Wall was hypocritical, cowardly and cheapjack.(3 2200 1/4/83)

14) Protestor: We're ordinary British people who feel strongly that we want a peaceful future, and we're not going to get it with nuclear weapons on our territories.(3 2200 1/4/83)

15) Protestor: Well we hope that it'll make people think about the nuclear weapons issue more seriously perhaps than some of them have done so far.(3 2200 1/4/83)

16) Protestor: To show exactly what we feel about these nuclear weapons, and why we're here, and that's why I'm here, and my daughter, because I want a tomorrow's world for her. It's quite simple.(3 2200 1/4/83)

17) Protestor: Mrs Thatcher should be doing something for peace instead of telling us what we should be doing. What's she done for peace?(3 2200 1/4/83)

18) CND leaders were clearly delighted with the response and the challenge it posed to the Government.(3 2200 1/4/83)

19) Joan Ruddock: This has been the most moving, imaginative and I think hugely succesful demonstration of all time in Britain. We have demonstrated again that we oppose the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the deployment of nuclear weapons, and research into any future nuclear weapons. We will have none of it.(3 2200 1/4/83)

20) Many demonstrators today said the movement was too strong to be ignored.(3 2200 1/4/83)

The Leader of the Labour Party

1) Labour Leader Michael Foot defended the women saying that they believed the deployment of Cruise missiles would make arms limitation more difficult.(1 2100 31/3/83)

President Reagan

- 1) President Reagan proposed a half-way stage in which the two superpowers would aim for equal numbers on both sides.(1 2100 30/3/83)
- 2) The President's message was that he'd be willing to settle for what he can get rather than end up with no agreement at all. (1 2100 30/3/83)
- 3) President Reagan: When it comes to intermediate nuclear missiles in Europe, it would be better to have none than to have some. But if there must be some it is better to have few than to have many. If the Soviets will not now agree to the total elimination of these weapons, I'd hope that they'd at least agree join us in an interim agreement that would substantially reduce these forces to equal levels on both sides. To this end Ambassador Paul Nitze has informed his Soviet counterpart that we are prepared to negotiate an interim agreement in which the United States would substantially reduce its planned deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched Cruise missiles, provided the Soviet Union reduce the number of its warheads on longer-range INF missiles to an equal level on a global basis.(1 2100 30/3/83)
- 4) The President spoke of his confidence in success at Geneva. (1 2100 30/3/83)
- 5) The President said he would cut the number of Cruise and Pershing missiles to be deployed in Europe if the Soviets dismantle some of the SS-20s already in place.(3 2200 30/3/83)
- 6) The President said no nuclear weapons in Europe would be best. He said his offer of that, the Zero Option, was still on the table and the Soviet Union's rejection of it was a deep disappointment to him.(3 2200 30/3/83)
- 7) President Reagan: But I do not intend to let this shadow that has been cast over the Geneva negotiations further darken our search for peace. When it comes to intermediate nuclear missiles in Europe, it would be better to have none than to have some. But if there must be some it is better to have few than to have many. If the Soviets will not now agree to the total elimination of these weapons, I'd hope that they'd at least agree join us in an interim agreement that would substantially reduce these forces to equal levels on both sides. To this end Ambassador Paul Nitze has informed his Soviet counterpart that we are prepared to negotiate an interim agreement in which the United States would substantially reduce its planned deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched Cruise missiles, provided the Soviet Union reduce the number of its warheads on longer-range INF missiles to an equal level on a global basis.(3 2200 30/3/83)
- 8) The President said the Soviets had launched a propaganda campaign to try and divide America from its allies and the

initiative which the allies had significantly helped to shape, and the closest possible consultation would go on.(3 2200 30/3/83)

9) President Reagan: This process is a model for how an alliance of free and democratic nations can and must work together on critical issues. It is the source of our unity and gives us a strength that no-one could hope to match and it gives me great confidence in the eventual success of our efforts in Geneva to create a safer, safer world for all the earth's people. Thankyou very much.

America/ Americans

1) The Americans insist their Cruise and Pershing missiles are not just bargaining counters but real weapons which will be deployed in Europe by the end of the year if there's no agreement in Geneva. (1 2100 30/3/83)

2) America is still insisting that in any compromise settlement the warhead figure for each side must be equal.(3 2200 30/3/83)

3) America is still insisting that the equal level should be global, the same number of American intermediate range warheads in Europe as Russia has facing both Europe and Asia.(3 2200 30/3/83)

4) America is firmly rejecting Russia's demand that British and French independent missiles should be counted in the balance. They must be excluded America says.(3 2200 30/3/83)

5) The Americans have suggested that the two sides have an equal number of missiles instead of insisting on their Zero Option.(1 2100 31/3/83)

Western governments/European leaders/NATO

1) The proposal has been warmly welcomed tonight by Western governments, including Britain.(1 2100 30/3/83)

2) NATO has formally endorsed President Reagan's latest proposal for limiting nuclear missiles.(1 2100 31/3/83)

3) European leaders like Mrs Thatcher have all approved his new approach.(3 2200 30/3/83)

The Foreign Office/Foreign Secretary

1) The Foreign Office says there's been the closest consultation between the allies about the idea, and it urges the Russians to consider the offer with the utmost seriousness and to respond positively.(1 2100 30/3/83)

2) The Foreign Secretary Mr Pym urged the Soviet Union to consider the American offer with the utmost seriousness and respond positively.(3 2200 30/3/83)

Britain's whole-hearted support.

CND

1) Monsignor Bruce Kent, the CND Chairman, said Russia was unlikely to accept the Reagan plan as a serious starting point for negotiations. He said it gave a distorted view of the European nuclear balance because it concentrated on land-based missiles.(3 2200 30/3/83)

2) Joan Ruddock: Well I think when [President Reagan makes this sort of gesture he has made on talks again or on offering a new deal he is trying to head off the European peace movements. He has known as we have for a very long time that we planned these demonstrations and I think it's a way of trying to defuse them, but he will not succeed because they are not realistic offers and they fall very far short of the demands of the peace movement, which is no nuclear weapons at all in Europe.(3 2200 31/3/83)

Soviet sources

1) A commentary in the government newspaper Izvestia said nothing would come of it. Izvestia said President Reagan was engaged in farce while trying to appear flexible. (3 2200 30/3/83)

2) Moscow has called it an old idea in a new wrapping. (1 2100 31/3/83)

3) The plan has been criticised by Soviet commentators for excluding British and French weapons and only covering land-based missiles. The Soviet Union has said these would have to be taken into account in any new agreement.(1 2100 31/3/83)

Chapter Seven

The Nuclear Election.

There will be no more important subject for the next four and a half weeks and beyond. (The Prime Minister on defence policy, the House of Commons, May 10th, 1983)

We turn, finally, to party politics, the third 'axis' on which the nuclear debate was conducted, and in particular to the moment of its greatest intensity - the 1983 General Election, when as the arguments about pro and anti-nuclear, Cruise and Pershing, Trident and Polaris, crystallised into a set of relatively clear electoral choices and were, for Britain, resolved until the late 1980s.

The normal rules of broadcasting journalism are suspended during coverage of an election campaign. The general requirement of "due impartiality" is replaced by a more precise formula of equal time for the major protagonists in the campaign. This chapter is not concerned with the application of this formal rule (which would have been a massive project requiring strict monitoring of the whole coverage over the relevant period) - or even primarily with the verification of 'bias' in news coverage of the different participants. Rather, given that the Nuclear Election coincided with the research period, it focusses on the question of news input and how this factor shapes images of the nuclear debate which appear on television. The discussion examines how the representatives of the political parties used television in the Nuclear Election, and to a lesser extent, how television journalists presented these respective policies to the electorate. It is the study of a propaganda war between the political parties, in which television news

election coverage, but aims to describe the main features of the campaign as they appeared through the 'window' of television.

The significance of such a study lies in the fact that in the modern industrialised world election campaigns are largely media campaigns, and in particular television campaigns. It is no exaggeration to say that elections can be won or lost in front of the television camera. In their introduction to an analysis of television coverage of the 1983 European Parliamentary elections, Blumler et al suggest that election campaigns:

live or die, gather momentum or falter, via the heavy and insistent stream of messages that are prepared for delivery during them to all quarters of the body politic. It is through campaign communication that impulses to participate are energised, issues are defined, and choices for voting decisions are conveyed (1983, p.4).

Television is not the only means of delivery of these messages, and it has not made redundant other forms of electioneering, but it is the most potent channel of communication open to politicians and parties. Gunter et al estimate that during the 1983 General Election an average of 7.8 million people watched BBC 9 O' Clock News every day and 5.8 million watched News at Ten on ITV (1984, p.5). "To a large degree", Anthony Smith has noted, "television coverage is the electoral campaign" (quoted in Ranney, 1983).

This is not merely the view of academics with a professional interest in asserting the sociological importance of mass communication. The participants in

elections are keenly aware of the need to 'project' on television. In US Presidential elections it is now taken for granted that the candidate's media image is of extraordinary importance to the result. If the effects of media coverage on the results of British elections are more complex than in the American system, with the latter's emphasis on the individual candidate, British politicians are by no means insensitive to the power of the medium[1].

The importance of election news on television is a factor of the size of its audiences, but in addition, as a 'media adviser' for the Republican Party in the United States expresses it, "television has a believability factor that almost no other medium has. When people are asked what do they believe most, the first thing they believe is television news"[2].

Television's general 'believability', and here in Britain its privileged status as a relatively objective news medium combines with its mass audience to make it a key element in the British electoral process. In the professional ideology of broadcasting journalism it is through television and radio that the issues of an election are aired in the most fair and balanced manner. Television is the 'neutral' mediator between politicians and electorate in a society where the majority of the press openly support the Conservative Party. Viewers largely subscribe to this view, Gunter et al finding that 70% of viewers thought television coverage of the 1983 election had "generally been fair to all parties and candidates" (1984, p.16).

This chapter analyses television news coverage of the 1983 General Election with respect to the defence issue. The discussion refers to a sample of news recorded during the period May 10th to June 8th 1983, which included the main evening bulletins on BBC1, ITV, BBC2 and Channel 4. A total of 82 news programmes were recorded, comprising approximately 60 hours of newstime. Within the content category of election news, 55 items reported the defence issue.

Three of these reported on the participation of CND (see chapter 6 above), and two were 'background' items. In the remaining 50 items of coverage of the party political debate the views of 27 separate sources were reported in a total of 174 statements (see table 7.1). These ranged from statements by party leaders and principal spokespersons, to quotations from manifestos, campaign committees, and 'party strategists'. The views of the Conservative Party on defence were reported in 28 items, those of the Labour Party in 25, and those of the Alliance in 19. Enoch Powell's controversial speech in support of unilateralism was reported in two items, and two items reported the results of opinion polls on defence policy.

The coverage contained three types of item. Firstly, reports of statements and counter statements made in the course of a day's campaigning. Secondly, longer items containing interviews, and thirdly, structured debates between the parties. In the sample, 44 items were in the first category, five were in the second, and there was one broadcast debate. Party political broadcasts are excluded

1983 General Election defence debate.

Source	BBC	ITN	total
Thatcher	12	17	29
Foot	11	18	29
Heseltine	8	6	14
Healey	10	16	26
Owen	9	12	21
Silkin	2	3	5
Heffer	1		1
Pym		2	2
Joseph	1		1
Willis	1	2	3
Jenkins		4	4
Callaghan		5	5
Benn		4	4
Mortimer	1	4	5
Golding		1	1
Hattersley	1	1	2
Lab Manif.	4	2	6
Con Manif.	1	2	3
All Manif.	1	1	2
Lab Cam Comm.		2	2
Tribune		2	2
Mullin		1	1
Powell		3	3
Steel		1	1
Lab's opponents		1	1
Conservatives	1		1
Labour strategists.		1	1
Totals	64	110	174

Table 7.2. Results of the General Election, June 9th, 1983.

	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Others
Seats	397	209	23	21
% share of votes	42	28	26	5
Votes cast	12,991,377	8,437,120	7,775,048	
% shift since 1979	-1.9	-9.7	+11.5	

control of the broadcasters.

There were two unique features about the 1983 General Election. Firstly, in 1983 for the first time, the 'serious' participants in a General Election - those with a chance of winning political power - disagreed fundamentally on the issue of Britain's national security. The bi-partisan consensus around which the Labour and Conservative parties had conducted defence policy since 1945 had been shattered. Secondly, it involved the participation of a third major party, the Social Democratic and Liberal Party Alliance, a factor of no small importance to the eventual outcome. For both these reasons, the electorate of 1983 was confronted with an unprecedented range of choices on the defence issue, which took on a unique importance as a campaign theme.

Labour entered the campaign as the first major party in electoral history to be offering complete unilateral nuclear disarmament as a manifesto commitment. Labour's programme advocated a completely non-nuclear defence policy for Britain including the cancellation of plans for Cruise and Trident, the removal of United States' nuclear weapons and bases from British territory, and the phasing out of Britain's own nuclear weapons such as the Polaris submarine system. All this was to be implemented within the lifetime of a single Parliament.

The Liberal-SDP Alliance supported the deployment of Cruise missiles at Greenham Common. It agreed with Labour however, that the Trident programme should be cancelled and,

Alliance differed from the Conservatives in proposing that Polaris should be included in the Geneva negotiations between the United States and the USSR.

The Conservative Party fought the election as upholders of the nuclear 'consensus'. They were committed to an expansion of Britain's own nuclear force with Trident, and to NATO's dual-track policy, including Britain's acceptance of American Cruise missiles. They rejected the view that Britain's nuclear weapons should be counted in negotiations between the USSR and the USA on arms control.

These were the contours of a debate whose outcome would shape British defence policy into the late 1980s.

The anti-nuclear protests of the previous Easter had signalled public opposition to defence policy on a scale never previously seen. Obstacles were anticipated all over Europe to the implementation of NATO's 'dual-track' policy. The first Cruise missiles were six months away from deployment at Greenham Common. The label of 'the Nuclear Election' which some commentators applied to the campaign reflected the centrality of the defence issue within it.

Mrs Thatcher herself "put defence at the top of her agenda" after she declared in the House of Commons that there "would be no more important issue"[3]. Michael Foot in turn identified defence as "the supreme issue" for the Labour Party[4]. On 14 days of the 21-day television news sample on which the following account is based defence appeared as a theme in one context or another, and was rivalled in

importance only by the issue of unemployment.

There was another notable characteristic of the 1983 General Election as it related to the defence debate. On the one hand the defence issue, perhaps more than any other, proved to be an electoral liability for the Labour Party. On the other, even towards the end of the election campaign opinion polls were recording something which had long been evident in Britain: public opposition to major elements of the Conservative Party's nuclear defence policy and corresponding support for a substantial part of Labour's unilateralist programme. On May 26th, at the height of the Labour Party's internal crisis over defence, ITN was reporting the results of a MARPLAN poll that "a majority of voters still oppose Cruise and Trident, 54% in each case"(3 2200 26/5/83). The same poll recorded that 45% of voters considered the Conservatives (who supported Cruise and Trident) to have a better policy than either Labour (who opposed both) or the Alliance (who supported Cruise but opposed Trident). This, the journalist suggested, "would seem to indicate that while the majority don't want Britain to abandon existing nuclear weapons unilaterally, they also don't want to add to the nuclear weapons on British territory".

When the votes had been counted on June 9th the Conservatives emerged as clear winners (see table 7.2). Their vote was almost 2% down on the election of May 1979 but a 9% swing from Labour to the Alliance split the opposition and increased Margaret Thatcher's majority in the House of

Election convincingly, and an analysis of the respective inputs of the three main contenders to television news coverage of the campaign provides some clues as to why.

The date of the 1983 General Election was announced by Margaret Thatcher on May 9th, and electioneering began the next day. On defence, the Conservatives took the initiative, setting the pace of the campaign and the agenda for public debate during the first week. They set about denouncing Labour as 'extremist', 'irresponsible', and 'dangerous', and although they did not begin to campaign 'officially' until May 20th, dominated television news in the first week with a series of interventions in which these themes were elaborated. Of 21 defence-related election news items in the first week, 13 contained Conservative denunciations of Labour and the anti-nuclear lobby. One event in particular, the Scottish Conservative Party Conference, was used by the Government as a platform from which to launch dramatic and widely publicised attacks on Labour.

The battle began on May 10th. That day in the House of Commons the Prime Minister demonstrated that she was prepared to confront the defence issue head on.

By calling the election when she did the Prime Minister had effectively prevented a long-awaited two-day debate on defence and disarmament, prompting the accusation from Michael Foot that she had 'run away' from the issue.

Foot: If the Right Honourable Lady was so anxious to debate these matters why did she cut and run and abandon that debate? If we had had our way that matter would have been debated in the House today. It was the Right Honourable Lady and her Government who ran away from it.

To this the Prime Minister replied that she was "only too delighted to discuss defence", and that she herself regarded

it as the most important issue in the coming campaign.

Election news that evening was dominated by these exchanges. From this ITN inferred that "Mrs Thatcher is going to concentrate her attacks on Labour's defence policy"(3 2200 10/5/83). Newsnight noted that "in the Commons Mrs Thatcher picks up Labour's gauntlet on defence"(2 Newsnight 10/5/83). A flavour of Conservative tactics in the coming campaign was provided in accounts of the rest of Mrs Thatcher's speech. She had attacked Labour's defence policies as "misguided and naive"(4 1900 10/5/83). They would "bring rejoicing only in the Kremlin"[5].

These early exchanges also showed how important to the Conservative campaign would be the theme of the Soviet threat. In 14 of the 27 items in which Conservative views on defence were reported, the Soviet Union appeared as a reason, either for supporting the Conservative Party's nuclear build-up, or for rejecting the Labour Party's proposed phasing out of British nuclear weapons. The British people were warned of the consequences if "our sworn enemies" had nuclear weapons and Britain did not. In one memorable statement, Defence Secretary Heseltine doubted Michael Foot's ability "to defend us from the ravages of a feather duster, let alone the menacing imperialism of Soviet ambition". The election campaign of 1983 confirmed the centrality of images of the Soviet Union to the defence and disarmament debate.

On May 11th, for example, the Prime Minister appeared on the Jimmy Young radio show. In the course of her interview, which was reported on three of the four sampled bulletins

Conservative victory. Otherwise, she argued, the USSR would not negotiate seriously at the Geneva talks.

Thatcher: I think that they would not come forward with disarmament proposals while there was an election in Germany. You know there was a similar issue between the two sides there and Chancellor Kohl won, and that was the first battle of getting two-sided disarmament. Now we've got another battle, because we are the really other big nation in Europe - Italy is also a staunch member of NATO. Now [the Soviets] are hoping to goodness that they can keep all their nuclear weapons and by various arguments, various devices, fool us into giving up ours.(4 1900 11/5/83)

On BBC2 she was reported as having taken a "fundamental swipe at Labour's unilateralism".

Thatcher: If you really hate nuclear weapons, as I do, you do not have one-sided disarmament, throw out all the American bases and leave all the weapons in the hands of sworn enemies.(2 2245 11/5/83)

News at Ten emphasised the Prime Minister's claim that:

the Russians were a big reason for calling the election early. Speaking in a voice made husky by a cold she said Russia wanted to see who won before concentrating on disarmament negotiations.(3 2200 10/5/83)

Two days into the campaign defence, and the Soviet threat, was thus established as a major election issue on television news. Furthermore, Mrs Thatcher was demonstrating her absolute faith in the correctness of her policies and her readiness to engage in battle with the Labour Party on the issue.

Chosen to put Labour's case on defence was Denis Healey, foreign affairs spokesman for the Labour Party[6]. Replying to her comments on the Jimmy Young Show he turned the Prime

the German elections, and now the British, as an excuse for not reaching arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. He speculated that following the British election the forthcoming Italian elections would be employed in a similar way by the pro-nuclear lobby, and concluded:

Healey: My impression is that neither she nor President Reagan have the slightest interest in reaching agreement with the Russians on stopping the nuclear arms race.(3 2200 1/5/83)

The next salvo of the campaign was launched at the Scottish Conservative Party conference, which began on May 12th in Perth. In a major speech Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine attacked Labour for proposing the "most dangerous gamble the British people have ever been invited to take". ITN reported gravely from the conference hall that there were "no smiles at Michael Heseltine's warning"(3 2200 12/5/83).

Michael Heseltine: Current Labour policies are in striking contrast to the moderate and sensible policies that have been pursued by post-war Labour governments. The truth is that it is the Labour Party itself which has changed. They propose to cast aside the political consensus on defence which has existed in this country for forty years as part of the price we are expected to pay for their evermore transparent lurch to left-wing policies.

Channel 4 news reported Mr Heseltine's reference to Labour policies as "naive, destabilising and dangerous... they might tempt the Russians towards military adventurism in Europe"(4 1900 1/5/83). On BBC news the Defence Secretary accused Labour of 'abandoning the consensus' that had, he said, kept the peace: "and I believe that by abandoning that consensus they are gambling with our freedom". These remarks were

desperately needed a halt to all nuclear weapons development and deployment"(1 2100 12/5/83). ITN broadcast a statement by Healey which addressed the specific issue of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent. Polaris should be included in the superpower talks, he said, because:

the minute you start arguing, as Mr Pym and Mr Heseltine have been doing in recent weeks, that no country can be secure without its own independent strategic striking force, then you begin to waken the sleeping giants in Germany and Italy and many other countries.(3 2200 12/5/83).

On Friday 13th the conference was addressed on the subject of defence first by Francis Pym, the Foreign Secretary[7], and then by the Prime Minister herself who reiterated the themes of the preceding days in a rousing and passionate speech which was covered in all bulletins, with the exception of BBC1's 9 O'Clock News[8]. ITN emphasised that during the speech Mrs Thatcher had "reserved her most withering fire for the unilateral disarmers, contrasting the protesters of Greenham Common with the brave young men of the Armed Forces who recaptured the Falklands"(3 2200 11/5/83).

Thatcher: What do they want? First, this Labour Party wants us to abandon our own independent nuclear deterrent, a deterrent which has kept the peace for nearly 40 years, a deterrent which has been endorsed by every Labour leader - Attlee, Gaitskell, Wilson and Callaghan. Remember Gaitskell's 'fight, fight, and fight again' speech. Remember Bevan said, 'do not send me naked into the conference chamber. Endorsed by all of those, but not this Labour Party. They want us to abandon our weapons without a corresponding reduction from the Soviet Union. Abandon ours and leave them in the hands of our sworn enemies. Someone asked Mr Andropov whether he would disarm one-sidedly, or unilaterally as we call it. He replied, 'we are not a naive people'. Well, our opposition is proposing to have one-sided disarmament. It will not do and it must not happen.

notice to quit on every American nuclear base in Britain. Many of them are part of the NATO alliance and part of the NATO defence. Not exactly the reaction of a reliable ally and a true friend. How does such an attitude recognise the tremendous contribution made by the United States forces to the defence of a free Europe?

If a hostile government was tempted to pursue its demands by armed aggression, which example would be more likely to make it pause? The renunciation of the means of national self-defence, which the banners at Faslane and Greenham call for, or the swift and sure response of our young men in the South Atlantic just a year ago? To be sure of freedom you need to be resolute and courageous in its defence, and have the means to do so. That is why on June 9th we will ask the people of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom to treat the nation's defence as the first call on the nation's resources... Mr Andropov and the Soviet Union are not going to negotiate seriously or put proposals on the table if they think there's any chance of the Labour Party being returned to power.

Thus it was the Conservatives who prioritised the defence issue in the first week of the campaign, focussing attention on Labour. The sights and sounds of the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary addressing their own party faithful in sympathetic surroundings, with stirring references to 'banishing the dark, divisive clouds of marxist socialism' made potent political spectacle. If Mrs Thatcher's decision to call the election on Monday May 9th was unrelated to the Scottish Conservative Conference it was certainly a 'happy coincidence', given its potential as a media event. This timing provided the Conservatives with a platform by means of which, with the aid of the Jimmy Young show on May 11th, they dominated the defence debate on three of the four campaigning days available that week.

However, if Conservative dominance in the first week of the campaign was partly the result of a skilful use of the media by the Conservative Party, it was also due to the

comparative weakness of Labour's input to the defence debate. Labour's initial line of attack amounted to Mr Foot's accusation on May 10th that the Tories had "cut and run" for an early election because they were afraid to confront Labour on defence. Given the obvious enthusiasm with which Mrs Thatcher tackled the issue Foot's line of attack rang hollow. And while the Tories launched a fresh initiative on defence every day, this was Michael Foot's only contribution to the defence debate during the first week. If television news revealed anyone to be reluctant to debate the defence issue, it was Labour.

Denis Healey's suggestion on the 11th that Mrs Thatcher was 'not interested' in arms control represented the most direct assault on the substance of Conservative policy during that first week. But Healey's remarks thereafter tended to lack the populist rhetorical flare of Thatcher and Heseltine whose simple and emotive language was ideal for a television campaign, both evocative and easy to comprehend in a 30-second news item. In addition he was handicapped by a reluctance to spell out in clear terms what unilateralism was and why Labour felt it necessary because, as soon became clear, he himself did not accept the policy.

This aspect of coverage, to which we shall return, was a self-inflicted wound for the Labour Party, but it also became clear in the first week that journalists were adopting a more critical approach to Labour's defence policy than to those of the other two parties. Television news coverage of the debate played a role in amplifying what would become Labour's

The party manifestoes were published on May 11th (Labour), May 12th (the Alliance), and May 18th (the Conservatives). An analysis of television news coverage reveals some significant variations in approach.

When the Conservative Party manifesto was published on May 18th it received no critical coverage or sustained analysis of its defence proposals. On Channel 4 for example, it was reported only that it attacked Labour. There was no reference to, or analysis of Conservative defence policy.

Labour's non-nuclear defence policy also comes under attack in the Manifesto. It's condemned as 'reckless and naive'. The Conservatives warn, 'Soviet nuclear strength continues to grow' - so - 'we will not gamble with our defence'.(4 1900 18/5/83)

News at Ten reported Tory warnings about the Soviet Threat, with a brief summary of Conservative defence policy.

The Manifesto warns that Soviet nuclear strength continues to grow. The Conservatives would maintain Britain's independent nuclear deterrent and if the Geneva talks fail deploy the Cruise missile by the end of the year. But they would continue to support all realistic efforts to reach arms control agreements.(3 2200 18/5/83)

Newsnight reported Conservative policy on Cruise and on Britain's own nuclear force, noting the party's view that "Britain must have an independent nuclear contribution"(2 Newsnight 18/5/83).

These were the only references to Conservative defence policy in television news coverage of the party's manifesto, or in any other coverage. Defence was apparently perceived by

Conservative policy. Indeed it was not referred to at all in BBC1's coverage, in which the issue of trade union reform was seen as by far the most newsworthy aspect of future Tory plans. Cecil Parkinson, Conservative Party Chairman and the only Tory leader to be interviewed on evening bulletins that day, was not questioned on defence. At no point before, during or after May 18th did television journalists scrutinise Tory defence policy (with the exception of a special debate between the three parties on Newsnight of May 16th discussed below).

As for the Alliance, there was known to be substantial disagreement between the SDP and the Liberals on defence, although the Alliance leadership maintained a public front of unity.

Alliance defence policy had to cope with a divergence of opinion between the Liberals, who had voted at their annual conference to reject Cruise and cancel Trident, and the Social Democrats who agreed with the cancellation of Trident but supported the deployment of Cruise. A potentially dangerous split was averted when the Liberal Leader David Steel unilaterally overturned the Liberals' conference decision on Cruise and came into line behind the SDP on the issue. The Alliance Manifesto was published on May 12th. As with the Tories relatively little attention was paid by television journalists to defence although the fact that Alliance manifesto commitments on defence represented a compromise was noted.

Liberal unilateralist and right-wing refugees from the Labour Party.(4 1900 12/5/83)

Inevitably, the Liberals and Social Democrats have had to compromise on defence. There's a firm commitment to cancel Trident missiles, but there's no mention of stopping the deployment of Cruise missiles as some Liberals would like.(1 2100 12/5/83)

In interviews with Alliance leaders Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins defence policy was raised but not emphasised as the major aspect of the Manifesto. The only note of criticism directed at Alliance policy on television news during the sample period related to Alliance ambiguities on Cruise and was addressed to Shirley Williams.

Couldn't you have spelt it out a little more clearly, what your intentions are on this vital matter?(2 Newsnight 12/5/83)

The subject of Alliance defence policy was not returned to after May 12th.

For Labour, the media interrogation of defence policy began on May 11th. That day the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party met and agreed on the contents of the manifesto. In the evening Labour representatives appeared on two bulletins to discuss their policies.

Labour's manifesto was quickly identified as problematic and the defence theme in particular rigorously dissected. Channel 4 news was first in with a description of the manifesto as "just a balancing act"(4 1900 11/5/83). The first question put to Denis Healey, Labour's representative on the programme, asked if it was not a "sign of the problem of reconciling opinions within the party that you've had to

defence?" Healey replied that precision was not necessarily a bad thing in an election manifesto: "we're saying precisely what we intend to do and it's because it's so precise that it's so long". With her next question the interviewer then suggested that, (contrary to the implication of her opening question), the manifesto wasn't precise at all.

Journalist: You say it's precise but would a vote for Labour mean unilateral or multilateral disarmament?

Healey: It will mean some unilateral measures like ending the Trident programme and stopping the purely American Cruise missiles from being based in Britain but it will also mean multilateral negotiations about the Polaris force and that's something as you know which the Russians have already asked for and the last Labour Government planned to do.

Journalist: But doesn't there come a point where the two are incompatible? What happens for example if, during the negotiations you talk about with our allies they say 'no, we don't want you to close down US bases?'

Healey: Well there of course we'll have to make a choice but I've been discussing this with leading American experts and their view, like mine, is that it's very unlikely the Americans will need their submarine base at Holy Loch once they get their Trident submarines into service because that'll be based in the United States. And Mrs Thatcher told Jimmy Young this morning... that the American bombers based in Britain are clapped out and obsolescent.

Journalist: But do you really think that NATO can do without American bases of any kind in this country?

Healey: Not of any kind, of course not, but of nuclear bases I think that's quite possible.

In a second interview, conducted by Newsnight on May 11th, this time with Eric Heffer, Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party attention again turned quickly to defence policy. The journalist in this case chose to make an interpretation of what Labour's policy "must" imply.

defence programme within the lifetime of a Labour Government. Now the chances are that that could mean considering leaving NATO within that because NATO is not going to cease having a non-nuclear defence policy in that time, is it?

Heffer: No, we haven't said we would leave NATO.

Journalist: No, what I'm saying is that the implication must be if you want to have a non-nuclear defence programme.(2 Newsnight 11/5/83).

Such a combative approach is not of itself the object of criticism, particularly in the context of a major public debate. The point is that it was not applied to the defence policies of the other two parties, except in the context of the special Newsnight debate discussed below where the policies of all three parties were compared.

Coverage of the Conservative manifesto, for example, made no examination of the claim that the Conservative Party would "continue to support all realistic efforts to reach an arms control agreement". This major claim, with its implication that the Conservatives had previously supported such efforts was unchallenged, nor was it related to the Tories' other stated objective of increasing Britain's nuclear force with the Trident system. There were no questions put to Conservative spokespersons about the 'incompatibility' or 'irreconcilability' of these policy goals, or statements about what the implications of such policies "must be" for arms control.

Yet Conservative plans for expanding Britain's nuclear arsenal were no less radical and, by the evidence of opinion polls, no more popular than Labour's intention to reduce it. In an interview on Newsnight of May 24th the official Labour

Party defence spokesman John Silkin attempted, unsuccessfully, to encourage a critical analysis of Tory and Alliance defence policies.

Journalist: When you say that the party is still committed within the space of the next government, assuming it gets a fair number of years, to go completely non-nuclear including abandoning Polaris, is that correct?

Silkin: Well what one would hope, and this is a very interesting point, I think it's a significant point, it shows where the Alliance has fallen down and where the government has fallen down too. What we are in fact assuming is that we will have negotiated a deal with the Russians, who are very keen to do a deal on Polaris. Now nowhere did I hear Mrs Thatcher or Mr Heseltine on the one hand, or Dr Owen talking for the Alliance on the other, say that they would be prepared to negotiate Polaris if the Russians give us sufficient nuclear weapons in return. They're not prepared to do it. They may talk about multilateral nuclear disarmament but they're not prepared to bring it into practice.

Journalist: But while we are on the specific subject of Labour's nuclear, or rather non-nuclear -

Silkin: Yes, but you've got to examine [the three parties] together on this.

Journalist: Indeed that's correct but I can't ask you for clarification about their policies. Well I could -

Silkin: You can ask me the questions I raise on them, and I do raise those questions. If they're so keen on multilateral disarmament why aren't they prepared to back us on putting Polaris into the negotiations?

Despite variations in the approaches of journalists to the defence programmes of the three parties it is not suggested here that media criticism was responsible for the electoral disaster which eventually befell Labour. Early coverage showed that the most serious problem faced by the Labour leadership was a difficulty in expressing Labour's own defence policy, as some leading party activists recognised.

On May 26th, when the Labour Party was in full retreat on

the defence issue, Channel 4 news interviewed Chris Mullin, editor of Tribune, on the content of an editorial attacking the Labour leadership on precisely these grounds. The offending editorial had observed that "the rift between Mr Foot on the one hand, and Messrs Hattersley, Healey and Shore on the other has distracted attention away from the real reasons for Labour's opposition to nuclear weapons...no wonder the public is confused about Labour's defence policy when half the shadow cabinet doesn't seem to understand it either".

Despite being accused by the interviewer of "rubbing salt in the wounds" Mr Mullin posed the following question: "why are the Labour leaders not putting forward the real reasons for wanting to get rid of Britain's nuclear weapons? They haven't so far been argued by most of Labour's leaders".(4 1900 26/5/83) He argued further that "it appears, so far, that most members of the Shadow Cabinet don't understand [Labour's defence policy], and one feels that if the nation has the actual arguments put to them people would understand it a great deal better".

In his first Channel 4 interview Mr Healey's argument for removing American nuclear bases from Britain relied exclusively on the claim that "it's very likely that our allies do not believe that it's essential for us to have American nuclear bases in Britain". When the journalist suggested to him that Labour's traditional working class vote would desert the party because "people will think that you're committed to leaving the country undefended" Healey replied

would never allow anyone with whom he was connected to do anything "which threatened the defence of our country". These arguments were used to the exclusion of any positive reasons for getting rid of nuclear weapons and bases.

In the first week of the campaign (and subsequently) Mr Healey and the Labour leadership in general did not shift the ground on which the Conservatives were conducting the defence debate. They rarely challenged an agenda, set by the Tories and shared in its essentials by the Alliance, which took as given the reality of the 'Soviet threat' and the effectiveness against that threat of forty years of nuclear deterrence. In his Channel 4 interview Mr Healey gave his view that "we have a rough balance between Russia and the West at the moment", but despite the centrality of the Soviet threat concept to the nuclear debate he never again raised the issue. Only one other Labour representative was reported engaging in a critique of the concept of the Soviet threat. This was Tony Benn, whose campaign speech of May 26th was reported by Channel 4 news.

Journalist: In a speech a short while ago Mr Tony Benn accused the Tories of trying to impose a mood of fear on the country.

Benn: I'm talking about the ways in which they try to persuade people that if it wasn't for Mr Heseltine and Trident the Russians would be in Liverpool by June 9th. Now do you honestly believe that the Russian people - who lost 22 million dead in the last world war - do you honestly believe that they have already got plans to move into Poland, take over East Germany, take over West Germany, move into France, take over Italy, go to Belgium, come to England, deal with Ken Livingstone, move to Liverpool and restore the Lord Mayor or whatever they think to do? Do you imagine that's what they're going to do?(4 1900 26/5/83)[9]

The Conservatives, as already noted, clearly understood the importance to their own campaign of asserting the Soviet threat, referring to it explicitly in 13 of the 28 items in which their views on defence were reported. Throughout the campaign the Soviet threat remained the most important legitimising device underlying the Conservative Party's defence policy.

By contrast, apart from the examples referred to above, no other Labour Party figure addressed the issue of the 'Soviet threat' in television news coverage. While proposing to break with a well-established bi-partisan policy Labour was locked into a debate conducted within the terms of the pro-nuclear lobby and in which its views were presented almost exclusively by a well-known former member of that lobby. This had important consequences for Labour's television presentation, as became increasingly apparent in the second week of the campaign.

Apart from the publication of the Tory manifesto on May 18th the second week of the campaign was relatively quiet on the defence front. From a television point of view the major event was an extended Newsnight debate on the evening of May 16th. The participants were Michael Heseltine the Defence Secretary, David Owen, Deputy-leader of the SDP, and Denis Healey. Mr Healey's comments in this interview are particularly significant as they were the beginning of the 'scandal' which erupted eight days later on May 24th.

The discussion was introduced with a resume of the nuclear debate. It was noted that the women protesters of Greenham

Common had "made sure that one of the key issues in the election would be nuclear weapons. They had developed " a new language of protest, a new style of politics". Then the debate began with a question directed to Mr Heseltine.

Journalist: The charge commonly made against the Tories is that their defence posture is aggressive in rhetoric, needlessly dependent on Mr Reagan and the United States, and increases the nuclear armoury in an unnecessary way. How would you answer that charge?(2 Newsnight 16/5/83)

Mr Heseltine replied that noone who had followed the debate "could possibly make it". Nuclear deterrence had kept the peace for "the longest period of contemporary history in Europe". The continued presence of a Soviet Threat necessitated a nuclear defence. He added that the Labour Party, not the Tories, had broken with the consensus, and suggested that Mr Healey himself was one of "the few" within the Party who disagreed with Labour's defence programme.

Heseltine: The only reason I know why anyone now wants to change [the consensus] is because the Labour Party has gone way to the left, leaving behind a very small number of people at the top of the Labour Party, including Denis Healey, defending a position himself that the Labour Party's no longer prepared to defend.

In the first moments of this debate attention was thus focussed on Labour. As the debate continued both Mr Heseltine and Mr Owen returned to this theme: Healey was a multilateralist, like them.

Heseltine: The real world is that you [Healey] have been left behind by the Left of the Labour Party, and everybody knows it. I think the real world is that two years ago Denis Healey was saying something absolutely contradictory to what he's saying today, and everybody knows it. The fact is the Labour Party has gone left, and we know that Denis Healey's policies have been left behind.

Owen: When [Healey] was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1978, when he had all the other pressures on expenditure, he agreed with me and Jim Callaghan, we increased the defence budget. We agreed to follow the NATO 3% per year real terms increase. It was right then and it's right now.

Healey was reminded that he had been a key member of pro-nuclear Labour Governments. Mr Heseltine accused him of being party to the original decision to deploy Cruise in Britain. Healey's ability to counter these accusations was hampered by the fact that they were in many respects true. In replying to Heseltine's point about Cruise he was forced to concede that while a member of Jim Callaghan's Cabinet he had supported the modernisation of NATO's medium-range nuclear force but that no decision had been taken as to the precise form of deployment.

Healey:... a joint communique [of May 1979] said explicitly they [the then Labour Government] had not decided, even on principle, on whether to modernise nuclear weapons, and if so, how.

Heseltine: That is categorically untrue. They said it was necessary to modernise the weapons, but they did not say what weapons.

Owen: We certainly agreed to do something to modernise...Where Denis is right is no decision was taken as to the form of deployment.

Heseltine: What Denis is now doing is trying to defend a party policy which has moved away from his own convictions and his own experiences as Secretary of Defence.

This 'defence debate' can be seen as a paradigm for the Nuclear Election as a whole. In effect it became an assault on Labour's integrity. Mr Healey's preferred public image as elder statesman was worked against, rather than for Labour's non-nuclear defence policy. In the course of a debate which

Conservatives (one which he repeated three times) was to suggest that money spent on nuclear weapons was depriving "the 2nd Paratroop Regiment, the heroes of Goose Green", who were "having to buy with their own money the protective equipment they need because they're not satisfied with that provided by Mr Heseltine". Without disputing the validity of this point if it were true it was far from being the crux of the nuclear debate, as Mr Heseltine pointed out in reply. The effectiveness of Healey's point was further eroded when David Owen pointed out Labour's manifesto commitment to reduce conventional as well as nuclear defence spending.

Owen: There's no use talking about what Mrs Thatcher's done for the Navy. [What Labour] would have to do to the Navy would make her [cuts] look like a picnic.

The section of the debate that caused the deeper controversy however, was that in which Mr Healey explained Labour's own policy. His presentation of Labour's non-nuclear defence programme, in combination with other statements made by himself and the Labour leadership team in the following days, would eventually be fanned by the mass media and the opposition parties into the event of the election. We recall that in the Channel 4 interview of May 11th, Healey had stated that Polaris would be entered into "multilateral negotiations" with the USSR. Here, when questioned on the future of Polaris under a Labour Government he asserted that its phasing out would be conditional on Soviet concessions. In short, the Labour Party would not necessarily implement a non-nuclear defence policy within the lifetime of a Parliament.

Journalist: Could you explain...given that you will have a non-nuclear defence policy at the end of the lifetime of one Labour government, that would mean that the unilateral commitment takes precedence over the multilateral one, I mean that is absolute, isn't it?

Healey: Mr Callaghan's group of ministers decided before the last General Election to put the Polaris force into the disarmament negotiations and that implied a readiness to give it up if we got adequate concessions from the Soviet Union, and that is still our position.

With this statement the foremost Labour spokesman on defence set in motion a process of public declaration and counter-declaration by party leaders attempting to set the record straight. As this process gathered momentum the substantive issues of the debate seemed to lose their relevance for journalists and receded into the background. Media attention focussed increasingly on the leadership's inability to present a coherent defence policy.

Before examining coverage of this phase of the campaign in detail it is worth noting that at least one rationale for a non-nuclear defence policy was presented and covered on the news. Ironically, the author of this view was the Right-wing 'bogeyman' of British politics - Enoch Powell, who on this issue found himself on the same side as the Labour Party. Indeed, Powell's critique of the concept of 'nuclear deterrence', reported three times in the sample, was arguably the most effective and direct to be made during the entire campaign. His speech, an extract from which is given in Chapter 2 above, was covered in the following way:

Mr Enoch Powell has sided with Labour over nuclear weapons, though he stopped short of repeating his advice in 1974 to vote Labour. Mr Powell spoke tonight of the transparent absurdity of nuclear deterrence. He said

and the Soviets could destroy every vestige of life on these islands several times over. Mr Powell said for Britain to use nuclear weapons in these circumstances would be worse than suicide, it would be genocide and the extinction of our race. He said it would be insanity to call nuclear weapons defence. (3 2200 31/5/83)

Back on the campaign trail, following the Newsnight debate of May 16th, Labour had begun a slide into confusion and contradiction. Over the next few days the Conservatives and the Alliance began to use Denis Healey's contradictory statements in order to undermine the credibility of Labour's defence policy, shifting from attacking the content of Labour's policy to mocking its presentation.

On May 17th the main defence story of the day was that Labour "didn't want to start talking about defence, which is an issue that could work both ways for the party, until next week" (4 1900 17/5/83). The context of this item was a statement made by Denis Healey who, it was reported, had "got out of his difficulties with unilateralism by putting the emphasis on no-first use of nuclear weapons". Mr Healey was reported as arguing for a change in NATO policy which would enable the alliance to "deter a massive Soviet conventional attack without requiring to threaten the first use of nuclear weapons". BBC1 reported that "today Denis Healey seemed to equate Labour's non-nuclear policy with the no-first use of nuclear weapons" (1 2100 17/5/83). Curiously, News at Ten's presentation of the same story implied that a major split had occurred.

Labour is committed to a non-nuclear defence policy for Britain, but Mr Healey said it was unrealistic for the West to dispose of its nuclear weapons while the Russians retain theirs. (3 2200 17/5/83)

Labour's programme proposed only that Britain should give up its nuclear weapons, not NATO or the West as a whole. ITN's account inferred that Labour was proposing for the West to give up its nuclear arms, while 'the Russians' retained theirs, and that Healey was opposed to this policy. His actual statement was broadcast on BBC1, from which it can be seen that this was not the content of his remarks.

CND, like the Labour Party, concedes that it is not possible for the West as a whole to get rid of nuclear weapons so long as the Soviet Union has them, and that is a matter for multilateral negotiation.

News at Ten also reported an attack on Labour by David Owen.

He called Labour's defence policy nonsense. He said Labour was the party of verbal elastoplast. They couldn't even stitch up their splits and divisions.

On May 18th BBC reported an attack along similar lines by Michael Heseltine.

He cannot rewrite the Labour Party manifesto in speech after speech, or in television programme after television programme. If he believes in the Labour Party manifesto then he should stand up and fight for it. He cannot turn himself into the fastest moving target in post-war defence history, and retain a shred of credibility. (1 2100 18/5/83)

With hindsight and the aid of a video recorder we can see that the seeds of Labour's defence problem were sown as early as May 11th. But the party had a few more days of uneasy calm on the defence front before the "splits and divisions" alleged by David Owen finally overtook them.

Their leaders are at odds, their manifesto is in shreds.(Roy Jenkins, 27/5/83)

On May 24th Labour's confusion over defence developed into what Michael Heseltine described as a "scandal". The previous day press and television journalists had arrived at Labour's regular morning press conference asking for clarification on conflicting signals coming from the Labour leadership, such as Roy Hattersley's statement on BBC's Question Time that "if there was no reciprocation from the other side of the Iron Curtain then a Labour Government would have to think about Polaris again".

That day there were a number of press articles on the apparent split. Foot, it was reported, had reaffirmed the commitment to a non-nuclear policy before the end of a single Parliament. Healey nevertheless maintained the position, as the Guardian reported on May 23rd, that "if the Russians do not respond Polaris should not be scrapped". Now, in response to what looked like open conflict between the Leader and Deputy Leader television news promoted the dispute to headline status. In that evening's news defence came to the centre of the election stage, if not quite in the way Labour had anticipated.

Defence has been brewing up as an issue since the beginning of the campaign and today in an attempt to confront it Labour itself was forced onto the defensive... the underlying difference over defence between Mr Foot and Mr Healey which the manifesto is supposed to bridge has again been exposed in the last few days...Mr Healey has stretched Labour's nuclear defence policy to include the possibility of retaining Polaris if arms reduction negotiations fail.(4 1900 24/5/83).

Channel 4 news on May 24th conducted a major interview with Michael Foot in which he was reported to have made it clear that "at the end of a Labour Parliament Britain would have no Cruise, no Trident, no Polaris". He also made a major clarifying statement during a speech in Birmingham which was covered on all bulletins. In this speech he committed Labour to putting Polaris into the superpower negotiations with the aim of reducing nuclear weapons on all sides. Phasing out Polaris, he said, would be "part of that process". Mr Healey, however, was reported on the same programme as saying that "we will review our commitment [to give up] the Polaris force [if the Russians make no concessions]". In evening bulletins Healey was repeatedly quoted apparently contradicting the Labour manifesto, and Michael Foot:

Healey: we want to put the Polaris force which we already have into negotiations with the Russians so that we don't get rid of that unless the Russians get rid of their weapons aimed at us, and that seems to me common sense.(1 2100 24/5/83)

If in fact the Russians break the promise they've made to cut their missiles aimed at us when we're negotiating with them as they've asked us to do, that'll be a new situation and we'll have to consider it when it comes.(3 2200 24/5/83).

The confusion engendered by these remarks was compounded by Mr Foot's reluctance to assert his authority and commit himself one way or the other on Polaris. His response to valid questioning was evasive and defensive.

Journalist: Mr Foot, can I ask you, would a Labour government get rid of Polaris even if the Russians did not cut their forces?

Foot: What I want you to do is to study this statement carefully -

Journalist: I have.

Foot: - well, to study the whole of our manifesto and you will see that we propose to proceed stage by stage. We are going to establish a non-nuclear defence policy for this country, we are going to start off by having a, seeking to give British backing to the nuclear freeze, we think it's quite wrong that the British Government should have rejected that policy and we can move stage by stage to the non-nuclear defence policy.(3 2200 24/5/83).

On the one hand, Labour's leaders presented a muddled and confused image of what their policy was, and on the other Mr Foot appeared unable to assert his authority. The resulting assault by Labour's opponents added the 'leadership' issue to the defence issue[10]. It was argued that Healey's statements refuting unilateralism, coming as they did from such an experienced elder statesman showed how extreme Labour's policy was. Labour's opponents also alleged that Foot's performance had destroyed his credibility as a serious candidate for Prime Minister. Charges of extremism were combined with increasingly personal attacks on Mr Foot.

Thatcher: I would not accuse them of lacking clarity in the manifesto. They may well be trying to retreat from it now but [unilateral nuclear disarmament] is what they have put in their manifesto...If they were to get in, this is what the left would claim they had a mandate to do.(4 1900 24/5/83)

Heseltine: Quite frankly, Mr Foot has lost control. In the public gaze is Denis Healey, the man that Michael Foot beat for the leadership but who wouldn't now lie down. In the shadows, there wait Mr Foot's left-wing masters. Labour's new elite, the extremists to whom he owes the leadership of the Labour Party, and in the middle is the yawning gap of Michael Foot's credibility. I wouldn't trust him to defend us from the ravages of a feather duster, let alone the menacing imperialism of Soviet ambition.(3 2200 24/5/83)

David Owen: The trouble is, that he's been rumbled. Michael Foot's been rumbled, and the trouble is that the left are not prepared to allow Healeyspeak to continue to be the acceptable face of the defence policy that

all beginning to realise that Michael Foot and Denis Healey have been playing about with the nation's defences.(3 2200 24/5/83)

On May 24th, the media spotlight was turned on a party whose leaders were apparently at odds, unable to agree on the defence policy which they claimed to uphold. Election news on May 24th showed the Labour Party to be in "disarray" over defence. The crisis intensified on May 25th when former Prime Minister Jim Callaghan spoke out in favour of the Reagan/Thatcher position at the Geneva talks, and against Labour's own defence policy. Callaghan's speech was widely reported, coming as it did from such an authoritative former member of the defence establishment. It also provided a neat follow-up story to the events of May 24th, and ensured that Labour's problems would be headline news for another day.

The next day, May 26th, Labour's 'defence problem' again stole the headlines. So grave was Labour's own assessment of its public image that at the morning press conference of May 26th the party's General Secretary Jim Mortimer had decided it was necessary to reaffirm Michael Foot's leadership. However, a statement intended to strengthen Foot's position further weakened it in the eyes of television journalists. Channel 4 described Mortimer's statement as a "classic own goal" which had "raised the issue of Michael Foot's leadership right in the middle of the campaign"(4 1900 26/5/83). Other bulletins agreed with this interpretation.

Meanwhile, the propaganda war continued. David Owen received major coverage with an attack on Michael Foot's alleged unfitness to govern. Michael Foot, he argued, was a

"gentle, kind person" but "totally unable to grapple with the whole complexity of nuclear weapons and nuclear issues...That man is not fit to be Prime Minister". Owen justified this accusation by recalling that as a member of the Labour Cabinet Michael Foot had refused to support nuclear defence. Margaret Thatcher was in the news, speaking to Conservatives in Harrogate.

Some of the Labour leaders know their policy's wrong. That's what the row's about...But it's all here in the Labour manifesto, and they voted for it. We're told it took a mere four and a half hours for the so-called moderates to give up a vital part of our country's defences.(3 2200 26/5/83)

That Labour was 'gambling with Britain's defences' became a major theme of the opposition parties' propaganda.

The development of the election defence debate in the directions shown here meant that television coverage of the Nuclear Election largely bypassed the substantive issues of the nuclear debate, except where these concerned Labour's Polaris policy, and concentrated on the Labour leadership dispute. It is not suggested that this was a deliberate or conscious exclusion of those issues by the journalists. Partly, it was the byproduct of normal election journalism in which, as Jimmy Carter once put it, "the peripheral aspects become the headlines, but the basic essence of what you stand for and what you hope to accomplish is never reported"[11].

Secondly, it was the consequence of Labour's inadequate news input to the news process. The policies appeared as incoherent and contradictory in their presentation, which generally avoided the central issues of why Britain's defence

should be non-nuclear.

In the 1983 campaign, in the area of defence policy, the 'peripheral aspects' concerning the Labour leadership eclipsed the defence debate as such. The debate about the relative worth of Labour, Tory, and Alliance policies was superceded by a debate on the various interpretations of Labour's policy conducted by the Labour leadership itself. In this sense the nuclear debate was not or lost in 1983, it was never really engaged.

Figure 7.1. Labour's defence policy in the 1983 General Election, as seen by the Daily Mail, May 23rd.



1. In the spring of 1985 the Granada company produced a series of television programmes called, appropriately enough, Television. One of these, The Selling of the President, examined the role of television in the electoral process of modern democracies. Academics such as Professor Ivor Crewe, and politicians such as Edward Heath, Harold Wilson and Richard Nixon, each expressed the view that of all the mass media available to an election campaign television was the most effective. Whether it is effective in reality is not so important for the purposes of this discussion as the fact that most politicians perceive it to be so.

2. Robert Goodman, Media Advisor, Republican Party, on Granada's The Selling of the President.

3. As reported on Channel 4 news, May 10th, 1983.

4. At a speech in Liverpool on May 17th Michael Foot proclaimed: "What the Conservatives headed by the Prime Minister are showing in this election is their unfitness to be in charge of the defence policy of Great Britain at such a time as this. What we've got the chance of at this election, on this supreme issue, is to push those ignorant barbarians out of the way and get on with the job of saving this country on a proper basis"(reported on News at Ten, May 17th, 1983).

5. The context of these remarks was a letter sent by the Labour Party leadership to the Soviet Government asking the latter what its response would be to Britain's nuclear disarmament. The Conservative MP Harvey Proctor had asked the Prime Minister is "she agreed that the Soviet response would be to accept the Labour Party's naivety in this matter and continue with nuclear weapons and, in addition, increase its nuclear capability?" (Hansard, Vol 42, p732). Mrs Thatcher replied: "I agree that the Opposition's defence policy is the most misguided and naive ever put before the British people. It puts in doubt our security and the defence of our traditional way of life. I hope that it will be firmly rejected. As regards the letter to Mr Andropov, I notice that it was Mr Andropov who was reported as saying, 'Let noone expect unilateral disarmament from us. We are not a naive people'".

6. Although Denis Healey appears to have been delegated the responsibility of speaking for Labour on defence during the 1983 campaign, it was in fact John Silkin who was the party's defence spokesman. During the sample Silkin's views on defence were reported only five times, while those of Denis Healey received coverage on 26 occasions. This was somewhat unfortunate for Labour, in the light of subsequent events since, as Silkin revealed in an interview on Newsnight, he if not Healey was fully committed to the manifesto commitment of phasing Polaris out within the lifetime of a Parliament.

7. Pym stated that "Labour has done a somersault. They have decided on defence what amounts to surrender. They are wrong, and dangerously wrong. They put at risk our very security".(4

8. BBC's 9 O' Clock news covered Mrs Thatcher's speech but not her statements on defence. That BBC news producers were aware of a possible tendency to 'bias' in coverage of the Scottish Conservative Conference was revealed in a Guardian article by Dennis Barker of May 14th, 1983: "The fact that the Scottish Tory Party Conference is on at the moment is not the BBC's fault and it may not be possible to balance Mrs Thatcher there".

9. Tony Benn was also reported on May 20th, when he attacked the Defence Secretary in what was described as his "first major speech of the campaign": "Mr Heseltine has no idea how to cope with the Greenham Common women. At one stage he was thought to believe that if he gave a million pounds to Saatchi and Saatchi that would cancel out the Greenham Common women but I don't know what he was going to spend it on - appear on television with a big missile and say 'Use Trident, the best detergent, or deterrent that you could find'. They do not know how to cope with a voice for peace and a testimony for peace by people not standing for Parliament but who are concerned with the issue"(4 1900 20/5/83).

10. Cockerell et al suggest that Michael Foot was the Conservative Party's greatest "negative asset" in the campaign (1983, p.214), but clearly, the confusion and incoherence was not his alone.

11. New York Times Book Review, June 19th, 1977.

Concluding Remarks.

This study set out to examine how the defence and disarmament debate which dominated British political life in the early 1980s was covered on television news. It has analysed coverage of the debates which took place on defence and disarmament issues between the West and the Soviet Union; between Western political leaders and the anti-nuclear protest movement; and between the political parties at the 1983 General Election. It was also centrally concerned with the theme which underlies all of these debates: images of the Soviet Union. The study sought to establish, mainly through large-scale content analysis, that television news did not construct "a merely factual account" of the defence and disarmament debate, but one in which certain perspectives were dominant.

It was argued that television's image of the Soviet Union tends to reinforce the logic of a pro-nuclear position, because it is a negative, threatening image. The need for a nuclear deterrent is very much tied to the alleged existence of a Soviet threat. Television news, it was argued, reinforces the concept of the Soviet threat in much of its coverage, and tends to reproduce a number of stereotypes of the USSR which have roots in conservative ideology. In this sense, they are not 'neutral' or 'impartial' images.

Subsequently, it was argued that in television news coverage of specific exchanges between East and West, such as occurred during the Korean airliner crisis or in the arms control talks, the Soviet view of events tended to be

constructed as a less credible, less truthful account than that of the United States government.

Our study of the domestic political debate between the Thatcher government and the peace movements noted that the activities of the latter were widely reported on television news, but that this was qualified by the 'counter-propaganda' of the defence establishment, such as Mr Heseltine's Berlin Wall visit of Easter 1983. During the sample period, it was argued, the views of the respective 'propagandists' in the East-West debate were not reported 'impartially'.

The analysis of the Nuclear Election noted significant variations in the approaches taken by journalists to the defence policies of the three parties, but concentrated mainly on the way in which the respective parties employed the news media. It was argued that the Labour Party was unable to present a coherent, consistent non-nuclear defence policy. The study also confirmed, in the campaigning tactics of the Conservative Party, just how important the idea of the Soviet threat is to dominant views on defence.

These then were the observed features of coverage, along the three 'axes' which we identified in Chapter 1. But in addition to describing the coverage the study also declared its intention to relate these features to factors involved in the social process of news production. These factors can be summarised under three headings: 1) the attitudes and assumptions of the news producers; 2) the set of constraints on the news-gathering process, particularly in relation to coverage of the Soviet Union, and 3) the approaches to news

management and news input adopted by the various participants in the debate.

The first of these factors affected coverage on a number of levels. In news coverage of the Soviet Union, it was argued that "ideological bias", to use the phrase of one Moscow correspondent, was evident in the language employed by some journalists. Such terms as "garrison state", "empire", "dictator" and "puppet" are not 'neutral', it was suggested. They reveal underlying journalistic assumptions about the nature of the USSR, and reinforce the validity of defence policies premised on the notion that the Soviet Union, as Mrs Thatcher put it, is "our sworn enemy". Journalistic attitudes were reflected in the tendency to depict the negative aspects of Soviet/socialist life, and to omit from coverage information which might construct a more positive image of the USSR than dominant views portray. Attitudes were evident too, in the way that journalists frequently made sense of US and Soviet positions, in such contexts as the arms control talks. US proposals tended to appear as sincere and genuine, while those of the USSR were marginalised as, on one notable occasion, "attempts to drive a wedge" between the NATO allies.

Because of the special nature of election broadcasting, the study avoided making major claims about coverage of the party political debate. It was noted however, that there was a tendency in the early stages of the campaign for journalists to challenge Labour's defence policy with a vigour and a consistency absent in coverage of the other

envisaged a massive unilateral increase in Britain's nuclear weaponry, as radical in its own way as Labour's proposed disarmament. The radicalism of both policies was not in doubt, but only Labour's was interpreted as such in the sample.

At the level of routine journalistic practices, attitudes and assumptions about which are the most authoritative and credible sources of comment on defence and disarmament issues were evident in the structure of access. Establishment sources enjoyed a privileged, largely uncritical access in coverage of debates involving the USSR on the one hand, and the peace movements on the other. The assumptions of these primary definers were rarely contested by journalists.

We say rarely, because throughout this study evidence has been found to refute the view of a simple or straightforward media 'bias' in coverage of these crucial issues. The attitudes and assumptions argued to be present in much of the coverage were by no means evident in all of it. A number of 'counter-examples' to what were identified as tendencies in coverage were discussed. The "currently dominant" notion of the Soviet threat was the critical focus of an item in October 1983, on the eve of the Cruise and Pershing II deployments. In June 1982 and May 1983 news items explicitly challenged the sincerity of the Reagan Administration's arms control policies by contrasting its words with its deeds. The dominant US definition of the Korean airliner crisis as an example of 'Russian barbarism', 'preferred' in the great proportion of television news coverage, was contested on a

handful of news items during the crisis itself, and in several items in the period following the crisis.

As we go through these counter-examples, however, it becomes clear that they are concentrated almost exclusively in minority-audience news programming. Not only does the minority-audience format present lengthier and more detailed coverage of complex issues in general, but it permits a wider range of views to be accessed as serious, credible views. When Soviet commentators are accessed on television news, it is these programmes on which they appear. The same is true, with few exceptions, for 'dissident' establishment sources such as Admiral Noel Gaylor. These programmes are, to use Schlesinger's phrase, "relatively open" spaces within television news. To a limited extent, British broadcasting does 'negotiate' with viewpoints in competition with dominant ones: a negotiation which, as Hartley puts it, "is no sham" (1984, p.62).

A second factor with important effects on defence and disarmament news was argued to be the set of constraints which face journalists in the news-gathering process. Given that images of the Soviet Union 'frame' the nuclear debate, the study tried to show how the work of the journalists who produce these images might be affected by the constraints put in their way by the Soviet authorities. These constraints, we have suggested, contribute to a pattern of coverage of the Soviet Union which highlights the themes of dissidence and dissent, and neglects or omits what one journalist called "the unknown factor" of Soviet life. The interview data used

'ideological biases' against the USSR and desire to redress them, but find their attempts to do so frustrated in a variety of ways. If some journalists are 'biased' against the USSR and share the assumptions of currently dominant groups, others find the range of images of the USSR which they can produce limited by the actions of the Soviet authorities.

A related point emerges when we consider the third factor involved in shaping coverage: news management and news input. We have argued that television news tends to favour establishment sources in constructing accounts of issues: that establishment views are privileged as a consequence of routine journalistic practices. During the sample period, however, this structural 'bias' was complemented by the different approaches of the competing sides to news management. On the one hand the United States used the media with consummate skill. With the Zero Option and Interim Zero Option proposals the Administration 'fed' its viewpoint into the Western European mass media system with the help of live satellite transmissions. By satisfying the broadcasters' hunger for pictures and spectacle the Administration gained maximum exposure for its views. In the Korean airliner crisis the Administration went public immediately, seizing the propaganda initiative and ensuring that its account of the event dominated the media, including British television news, in the first crucial weeks.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, tended to treat the techniques of news management with suspicion and disdain, in the long-held belief of its dominant groups that any

information given to the Western media would be used against it. Exemplified during the first few days of the Korean airliner crisis, this policy created an 'information gap' which the Reagan Administration was only too happy to fill.

This factor, combined with the constraints referred to above, leads us to the conclusion that negative 'images of the enemy' on British television, and the features of coverage of the defence and disarmament/ East-West debate which have been noted in this study, are not accountable solely by reference to the ideological or structural 'biases' of journalists. 'Bias' is a valid explanation, but not a sufficient one. The Soviet approach to Western journalism, to news management and news input, is also important, as can be seen most clearly in the new Soviet approach to summitry. The Soviets have a certain capacity, should they choose to employ it, for shaping the coverage which they receive in the West. Journalists are not mere puppets of the powerful. They apply rules and practices which, if they produce form of news structurally subordinated to dominant viewpoints in general, nevertheless creates spaces for competing viewpoints, including the Soviet one, to be represented with a reasonable degree of fairness. Images of the Soviet Union in defence and disarmament news are shaped by Soviet attitudes as well as those of the journalists. Indeed, as the defence and disarmament debate continues into the late 1980s, the Soviets under a new leadership appear to have learnt this lesson. Now they adopt news management techniques which compare with those of the Reagan Administration in their appreciation of what Western journalists require and in the opinion of some

journalists, as we have shown, the presentation of the Soviet viewpoint in the West has already begun to benefit from the new information policy.

The negative effect on coverage of bad news management and news input was seen in another way during the 1983 Election, when the Labour Party found itself on the defensive over issues which were peripheral to the nuclear debate. Choosing not to tackle the issue of the Soviet threat, and presenting an incoherent, contradictory image of its policy on Polaris, the party never looked like winning support for its views.

Skilful news management will not cancel out the effects of journalists' attitudes and assumptions, but it can provide those journalists who aspire to a more 'objective' coverage of the issues with better raw material to work with.

Television news remains a major source of information for the British people about the complex issues involved in the continuing defence and disarmament debate. It will continue to contribute to the outlining of what Ranney calls "the framework in which we behave politically" (1983, p6). In that context, the conclusions of this study raise questions about the freedom and availability of information which are no less pertinent today than they were when the research began.

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